

Early Sydney punk: Methods in visual ethnography

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Doctor of Creative Arts

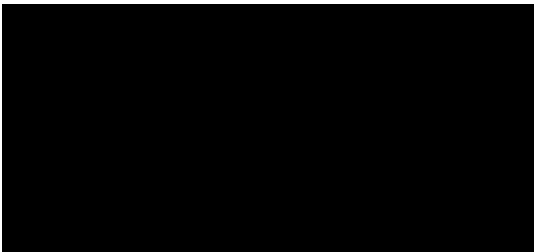
School of Humanities and Communication Arts

University of Western Sydney

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Statement of originality

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work except where explicitly acknowledged. I hereby declare that I have not previously submitted this material for a degree at this or any other institution.



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Abstract

This thesis explores the recollections of participants who were part of a cohort associated with a small punk venue known as the Grand Hotel, which operated at Railway Square, Sydney, between 1977 and 1979. While Australia's first-wave moment has been increasingly recognised within a growing body of literature on punk, it has been considered almost exclusively in a music context. This study emphasises the sociality of punk subculture which has been largely absent from the record.

The thesis comprises a creative component based on a series of video-recorded interviews, and a written exegesis. The video production, titled *Distorted: Reflections on early Sydney punk*, was developed through methods drawn from ethnography and other qualitative methodologies. The work presents discussion on a range of social, personal and political concerns of late 1970s Sydney through the reflections of participants. As such, it is a visual ethnography with a research focus on the past and on memory as articulated in a present setting.

The written component of the thesis discusses aspects of cultural studies and subcultural theory in relation to punk as experienced in a post-colonial space, which is framed within an analysis of anthropologically-oriented ethnography. The text then discusses in detail the methodological underpinnings of the research. It is here that I advance an approach to audiovisual production which utilises computer assisted data analysis software within an analytical and conceptual framework drawn from grounded theory and narrative analysis.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

One often has to distort a thing to catch its true spirit.

Robert Flaherty

This study reflects on a moment when globalisation had not yet been radically accelerated by digital communications and network technologies. Late 1970s Australia was a print-televisual analogue society balancing a burgeoning sense of nationhood against a resilient colonial legacy. Punk occurred in Sydney on the cusp of its transformation from a somnolent town with a mostly non-residential CBD to an increasingly globally integrated city. It occurred also during one of the more tumultuous decades of Australia's social and political history. The election of the Whitlam government in 1972 and again in 1974 coincided with the fading of the spectre of empire in the public mind, and the cultivation of a new sense of national identity. The war in Viet Nam – an abject failure of United States interventionist foreign policy – had been a focal point of moral and social-justice outrage for many Australians. The end of lottery-style conscription to the war in Viet Nam and the Whitlam government's enactment of a major legislative programme, which also included universal health care and equity in education, paved the way for a more internal and personal approach to politics among youth and counter-cultural groups (Newton 1988).

The 1970s was also the decade of galvanisation for the long campaign for Aboriginal land rights and justice. These included moments of direct action such as the

Aboriginal Tent Embassy on the grounds of Parliament House, Canberra, and progressive legislative moves such as the enactment of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*, and the Woodward Royal Commission into Aboriginal Land Rights. While the Crown's dismissal in 1975 of Australia's elected federal government was legal under domestic law – whose constitution is after all merely a provision of Great Britain's Australia Act – it had a profound effect on the Australian cultural psyche and led to the mobilisation of many onto the streets and a deepening cynicism towards and distrust of institutionalised power. The Governor-General's use of reserve power had in effect revealed the extent of England's quiet but continuous legal jurisdiction over Australia. The exertion of power by proxy from 17,000 kilometres away had implications for Australia's self-concept, which in a sense was instantly transported back to the nineteenth century.

My study explores the experiences of individuals who were involved in a particular area of Sydney punk subculture from 1977 to 1979. The participants were part of a cohort of young people who frequented a pub venue at Railway Square called the Grand Hotel. The focus of the study is on the sociality of subcultural affiliation through participants' recollection of significant moments, practices, and standpoints. The study comprises a video-based creative component and a written thesis. The video component is based on a series of video-recorded interviews and a selection of audio and visual archival artefacts sourced mostly from within the cohort. The overarching approach to the video work draws on methods and concepts from ethnography, particularly in its approach to interviewing. The ethnographic framework helps to negotiate the interplay between past and present, that is, within the thirty-five or so year's difference between the subject of discussion and the

research period. It is worth stressing that this is an ethnography not of punks but of a dispersed cohort of mostly middle-aged individuals who were involved in punk subculture in the late 1970s. Some participants had clearly reflected on this moment of their lives while others had not given it much consideration until participating in the study. As Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 180) observe, the 'ethnography of the past, or of memory ... is not an imaginative reconstruction of past events by the analyst, but rather an ethnography of how actors *create* pasts for themselves and for others.'

The written thesis does not set out to explain the video work but rather seeks to articulate as clearly and fully as possible its contextual, theoretical and methodological underpinnings. The text aims to contribute to research in two areas: subcultural theory and specifically to the knowledge of early punk subculture in Sydney, and to the use of qualitative research methods in the field of visual ethnography and documentary filmmaking practice.

1.1 Research problem

This study presents a critical revision of punk within cultural studies scholarship underpinned by real-world ethnographic research. It aims to contribute to an understanding of punk-subcultural affiliation through the memories of a dispersed cohort by means of ethnographic inquiry. The study addresses the central question of how those who made up the cohort now reflect on their experiences and understandings of a particular time in Sydney's cultural history. What were their views on having identified with the relatively obscure Sydney punk scene in the late

1970s? How would participants reflect on their self-concept of almost four decades ago, and how and to what extent, if at all, would they now relate to that person?

Australia is recognised as having been at the forefront of first-wave (1970s) punk music performance and production (Encarnacao 2008; Heylin 2007; Johnson 1990; Thompson 2009). However, very little research has been undertaken that explores the sociality of punk subculture. Certainly no such work had been produced which derives from a perspective of those who participated in the making of punk subculture in Sydney. Consequently, what remains in the public sphere are a number of publications and productions framed within a rock music discourse (e.g., Anderson 2005; O'Brien 2010; Walker 2005), and media representations which fail to take account of punk's significance in Sydney's cultural history. For instance *Pig City*, a radio documentary produced for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, characterises Sydney's first-wave punk scene as 'dominated by mindless thrash bands ... who were glorifying violence and drug abuse' (Collins 2007).

The prevailing story of punk is in almost every instance the story of bands or musicians, filtered through the prism of the culture industry. As such, the discussion of punk frequently turns to the examination of the chronology of bands, who was first, their influences, were they 'real' punk or rock 'n' roll, and so on. Moreover, the dominant narrative preserves the notion that punk music precipitates and determines the interactional basis of the subculture – the legacy of which being the invalidation of participant experience and meaning making. It was of interest to me, therefore, in undertaking this research, to gain some insight into participant perspectives. That, however, does not exclude music production and performance from investigation; on

the contrary, many participants in this study involved themselves in various forms of music making. Rather, it delineates a sociality of punk that includes but is not defined by music production and performance, as is represented in the video component of the present study.

1.2 Motivations

The present study builds on my interest in reevaluating punk subculture, and continues to some extent from investigations begun in my masters thesis which sought to situate punk ethics within traditional frameworks of ethical theory. Undertaking the study within the setting of a creative arts doctorate provided a scholarly grounding for both the theoretical and practice-based aspects of the study. Here I was able to make an original contribution to the study of punk within the fields of cultural studies and post/subcultural theory as well as to develop an approach to data analysis which would contribute to film and video production within visual ethnographic practice (discussed at length in Chapter 5).

My understanding of the research subject is in part informed by my personal experience and involvement with the Sydney punk scene. My introduction to the subculture was by way of my older brother, Andy, who was a founding member of the Sydney- then London-based punk band The Last Words. This biographical connection is not atypical in qualitative research: as Williams, Tutty and Grinnell (1995: 50) state, ‘personal involvement is part of the motivating factor in research and will often arise from personal experience.’ To that extent, the motivation for the study was the result of the lack of reliable knowledge of early Sydney punk subculture. On the occasions I would come across an account of the period, it would too often be at odds

with my recollections, and it seemed the further away in time the perspective, the more unreliable the story. Aspects of the research are therefore implicitly influenced by my own experience, which provided a certain means for participant access and negotiating the narrative. Most importantly, though, it is a significant driver of interest and curiosity in my motivation for the study.

An early motivation for the study was a desire to archive and preserve what remained of the scattered and deteriorating artefacts produced in and around the Grand Hotel milieu. I had, over time, tried to keep track of materials, mainly 8mm film, photographs, and cassette tapes, which to the best of my knowledge were still in the possession of the people who had shot or recorded them. These objects, once so invested with meaning and moment, now sat in cardboard boxes and suitcases at the bottom of cupboards and under beds. Several years prior to embarking on the present study I began to digitise and transfer (telecine) these materials whenever I was financially able to do so. Over time I had developed a fairly substantial digital archive of the Grand Hotel and Sydney punk history.

1.3 Writing style and terms

The writing throughout this study often moves into a first-person narrative style. It does so, firstly, as a way to ground and give direct relevance to those sections concerned with methodology, and secondly because personal narrative is an established and recognisable writing style within ethnography. First-person language style has continued on into critical ethnography which tends to preference the personal in ‘the understanding that all presentation is subjective, the language of narrative’ (Harper 1998: 30). Moreover, it embodies and expresses the reflexive turn

which has reshaped ethnographic practice. Also commonplace within ethnography is the weaving of extracts of transcripts throughout the text, which grounds the thesis in the participants' points of view.

Throughout the text the use of the term *ethnography* may refer to new, critical, or experimental ethnography but only after initial indication is given to the context of the discussion. Similarly, the term *subculture* is used unless discussion relates explicitly to post-subculture. Terms such as scene, tribe, neo-tribe, and club culture, which have been posited as better descriptors for characterising subcultural formation, are used, again, in the relevant context (Bennett & Peterson 2004; Maffesoli 1988/1996; Muggleton & Weinzierl 2003; Thornton 1996). The term *visual* is mostly used as shorthand for audiovisual, referring to film and video in the broader sense. Lastly, as the research focus is concerned with a quite specific timeframe, the term *moment*, with its connotations of temporality and history, is used in preference to the more spatially suggestive field, terrain, or territory (cf. Shukaitis 2012).

1.4 Scope of the study

This study makes a scholarly contribution to knowledge about punk subculture in cultural studies and post/subcultural theory by presenting original cultural knowledge in the form of a visual and written thesis grounded in first-hand accounts and supporting archival artefacts. The study does not set out to present a definitive 'meaning' of punk, nor produce, as Furness (2012: 11) puts it, a 'scholarly cipher through which all of punk's secret meanings can be decrypted.' Neither does it claim to represent the actuality of Sydney punk subculture in the 1970s nor a rendering of 'how it really was'. In that respect, it is an ethnography of the past and of memory. As

noted above, the study considers music as part of the sociality of punk subculture rather than a determinant, and as such does not explore punk through a framework of popular music studies or ethnomusicological theory.

A methodological approach to audiovisual production is advanced which utilises computer assisted data analysis software within an analytical and conceptual framework drawn from grounded theory and narrative analysis. In this approach, an audio-visual product is developed *through* the analysis process rather than by means more commonly associated with conventional documentary filmmaking. As such, the production of the video component of the study is discussed neither in terms of film theory nor filmmaking conventions. While print and other forms of mass media are at times discussed in the present text, the video work is purposively emic in orientation and so draws from media produced almost entirely from within the cohort.

1.5 Outline of chapters

Chapter 2 presents a background to subcultures before exploring more recent conceptions in subcultural theory. The now defunct Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, and in particular the work of Dick Hebdige, is discussed critically in the context of 1970s punk subculture. Participant accounts are introduced to ground the discussion and to provide perspectives of punk subculture as it was experienced in Sydney. Critical discussion of post-subcultural theory is then presented where, again, participant understandings are interspersed in order to localise the discussion. The chapter concludes with a discussion of some of the assumptions held by the local press of first-wave Sydney punk.

Chapter 3 addresses certain problematics related to ethnographic inquiry which were relevant to the overall methodological framework of the study. The principal methods of ethnographic practice have in recent decades been extensively reconceptualised, as has what has come to constitute the ethnographic field. These developments in ethnographic inquiry helped me to better understand its methodological suitability for this study. Most importantly, the problematic of what I understood to be a fundamental spatio-temporal displacement in the research is addressed by exploring the differentiation between the research *focus* and the field *setting*. Aspects of memory, in relation to the ethnographic field, are explored followed by a discussion of visual ethnography and video production.

Chapters 4 and 5 are the core chapters of the thesis. Both chapters make use of participant perspectives to ground theoretical discussion in ethnographic data. The rationale for extensive discussion of the research process is because it is too often neglected or glossed over, perpetuating the notion that qualitative analysis is conducted arbitrarily which, in turn, affects its scope for theoretical development (Snow, Morrill & Anderson 2003). To some extent the focus on method was inspired by the transformative research approach of Judith and David MacDougall (1998, 2006) who, as Grimshaw remarks, ‘are unusual in making the contours of their project explicit, charting each stage of development as a response to the limitations of their previous practice’ (2001: 121). In this sense, the articulation of process is a reflexive practice in ethnographic inquiry.

Chapter 4 sets out the research design, the assumptions and rationale behind its methodological strategies, research methods used to gather data, and researcher-

participant relations in accessing the group. I reflect on the interview phase of the study by discussing a number of challenges and problems encountered, and the strategies employed to navigate through them. I conclude with a discussion of further observations of the interview process. Chapter 5 details the construction of the visual component of the study through computer assisted data analysis and non-linear editing applications. Extensive discussion is devoted to data coding schemes and the analytic approaches used to conceptualise and build the foundation for the video. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the participant validation phase of the study.

Chapter 6 discusses the public presentation of the visual component of the study, focusing on audience and dissemination. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the significance of the study, possible future directions for the research, and some final observations on the outcomes of the study.

Chapter 2

SUBCULTURE

Youth is approved by valour in dread wars.

Pindar

From the 1920s to the 1950s the Chicago School of sociology produced a vast body of urban ethnography in the construction of 'youth' in its present form (Hebdige 1988).

Sociology reflected considerable disciplinary crossover with anthropology (Hammersley 1989) which, in turn, became increasingly focused on the localised social worlds of Western culture. In broad methodological terms, whereas anthropological otherness is produced through intercultural distinction, othering effects in sociology are produced through intracultural categories such as deviance and labelling. Subcultures were defined as deviant cultures which 'operate within, and in distinction to, the culture of the larger society' (Becker 1963/1997: 82-83). This included drug users, gay people, and jazz musicians but also religious and ethnic groups; however, deviance here referred mostly to criminalised and pathologised activities and proclivities. Deviance and labelling theory became central to the study of subculture (Goffman 1963; Becker 1963/1997; Matza 1969/2010), which by the 1970s had moved into new criminological analyses (Taylor, Walton & Young 1973), and the structural production of crime (Quinney 1977, 2000). The model of subculture as a focus for investigation is inextricably linked to the potentialities of youth, and, in particular, youth as a metaphor for social change. Subculture grew to become a primary analytical model in sociology for investigating the cultural, particularly in youth formations and their interests (Brake 1985). The Birmingham Centre for

Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) became the locus for Marxian-oriented cultural studies and subcultural inquiry. With the core remit of social change, the CCCS distinguished itself from the British sociology tradition by, among other things, adopting a more qualitative approach to research (Hall 1980). As Bennett says:

“Youth”, as a disempowered yet highly resistant social group, provided the perfect vehicle for subcultural theorists to interpret popular music and its attendant visual styles as politicized resources in the power struggles that characterize late capitalist society. (2006: 222)

Discussion and analysis of punk subculture will necessarily include the work of CCCS researcher Dick Hebdige, who was writing the oft-cited *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979) during the first wave of punk. For Hebdige, bricolage in punk was visible evidence of the arbitrary relation between signified and signifier, and ‘a symbolic violation of the social order’ (1979: 19). This was spectacular resistance reflected through symbolic action, a confluence of Saussure, Barthes and Kristeva’s symbolic economy of the sign. Punk was resistance through symbols, and ‘predominantly working class’ (Hebdige: 103). Actions were oblique expressions, symbolic rather than directly political.

The ascription of the anthropological concept of bricolage to punk suggests a strategic semiotic intentionality that was largely absent from its lived experience. If punk played out a kind of ‘semiotic guerilla warfare’, it was for the most part ad hoc and circumscribed. In the present study, a number of participants discussed involvement with social and political activism alongside their affiliation with Sydney punk

subculture. In Hebdige, consideration of such real-world linkages is mostly set aside in favour of textual and conjectural analyses of political engagement, as it is in other commentaries on punk (R. Moore 2004; Davies 1996). Here the question becomes not one of whether punks are politically engaged but, rather, of the nature and strategies of engagement.

Marchart (2003: 86) asserts that, while ‘subculture plays with the inventory of political terms like “resistance”, “subversion”, and so forth, in most cases there is no politics in subcultural “politics”.’ Punks committed to social change cannot ‘universalize their demands’ within a subcultural form, closed in its own particularism (Marchart: 96). There is an assumption here that subcultural affiliation equates to social insularity and marginalisation, and that members are not as invested in broader social worlds (school, job, family and so on) as they are in punk culture. There is also the implication of a unified subcultural formation based on focal concerns, shared values and ideals. The tendency in cultural theory to situate subcultures such as punk within a moment of stasis, as internally coherent, bounded and intentionally political, corresponds in many respects to anthropology’s cultural holism and its practices and techniques of spatio-temporal othering (further discussed in Chapter 3). Yet, just as cultures are viewed as ‘composed of seriously contested codes and representations’ (Clifford 1986: 2), subcultures similarly are more accurately understood as heterogeneous formations, ‘as “discursive clusters” that momentarily coalesce around a configuration of values only to transform and mutate again, in a perpetual state of flux and cultural repositioning’ (Nayak 2003: 19).

The proposition that there is little in the way of ‘real’ politics in punk subculture, or

that it fails to develop an alternative mode of production ‘according to its own criteria’ (Thompson 2004b: 157), reflects a modernist conception of the political as monolithic and engagement as institutional. Raby (2005) has noted that such views are partly a response to the persistence of Hebdige’s symbolic resistance thesis. Marchart argues that punk subcultural politics remains ineffective until ‘a “collective will” can be forged out of all these disconnected everyday practices of supposed resistance’ (2003: 95). This argument is predicated on the notion of a ‘missing link’ between the micro- and macropolitical fields, which he characterises in terms of an ‘organic intellectual’ organiser, a ‘Modern Prince’; in other words, ineffective without some form of vanguardism. Todd May, in his *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, makes the observation that,

What has come to be called the poststructuralist critique of representation is, at the political level, precisely a refusal of the vanguard, of the idea that one group or party could effectively represent the interests of the whole.
(1994: 12)

Micropolitical practice, May argues, is not a replacement for macropolitics, but rather ‘re-forms traditional understandings of ... macropolitical institutions and practices’ (1994: 100). The two are interwoven. The whole idea of the micropolitical is that it works at the level of (to use Foucault’s term) the capillaries of the socio-cultural; it is not a matter of the institutions of power being stormed by the micropoliticised masses. May revisits philosophical anarchism in the light of poststructuralism in terms of its emphasis on practices as a means to work through the agency-structural dichotomy.

What is of interest to the poststructuralists is neither the constituting interiority of the subject nor the constituting exteriority of structures, but instead the interlocking network of contingent practices that produces both “subjects” and “structures.” (May 1994: 43)

However naively understood anarchism may have been across punk subculture in general, its underlying credo of engagement vis-à-vis monolithic structural configurations was certainly present in 1970s punk discourse. Extant philosophical-anarchist and anarcho-feminist ideas continued in sections of Sydney punk subculture, though not without first jettisoning much of its 1960s utopian countercultural rhetoric advancing an outsider position (communes and so forth). For the most part, however, if there was an anarchist sensibility present it was expressed in punk’s sociality and through the negotiation of space at the Grand Hotel. Graeber’s (2004) characterisation is perhaps close to how anarchism was articulated among a number of the cohort associated with the Grand Hotel:

It is common wisdom among anarchists, autonomists, Situationists, and other new revolutionaries that the old breed of grim, determined, self-sacrificing revolutionary, who sees the world only in terms of suffering will ultimately only produce more suffering himself. ... Hence the emphasis on pleasure, carnival, on creating “temporary autonomous zones” where one can live as if one is already free. (2004: 74)

A critique of subcultural theory

Early criticism of the Birmingham school subcultural model concerned the absence of female visibility, especially in field research. McRobbie and Garber (1975/1977: 221) argued for a shift away from the 'subcultural group phenomena' as 'girls can be seen to be negotiating a different space, offering a different type of resistance to what can at least in part be viewed as their sexual subordination.' Hebdige echoed this view, arguing that punk reshaped some of the masculinist bias of youth subcultures wherein girls were 'either silenced or made over in the image of the boys as replicas' (1988: 28). O'Brien advances the liberatory aspects of the first-wave punk as the moment in which 'the gender map had radically begun to alter. The unpicking that started with celebratory abandon on the underground 60s freakscene became a giant unravelling with punk' (1999: 186-187). Leblanc's ethnographic study, published in 1999 as *Pretty in Punk: Girls' Gender Resistance in a Boys' Subculture*, is one of the most accomplished analyses to date concerning girls and young women in what has been historically (and particularly in North America) a masculinist subculture. Leblanc's research highlights many of the inconsistencies and contradictions inherent in punk values, from its often strict uniformity within non-conformist 'outsider' culture to its evident misogyny within a supposedly gender-agnostic ethos (see King 2012 for a view of current US punk subculture as an alienating experience for 'women, queers, and people of color').

Gender and race remain critical elements in punk discourse. As Reddington has pointed out, it is the female memory of the punk moment 'that is likely to be forgotten' (2007: 5). The concern here is based on the erasure of girls and women musicians in the framing of punk as punk *rock* in rock 'n' roll historicism and its

pantheon of male musicians and bands. Equally, for Sabin (1999), the question of race in first-wave British punk subculture needs to be re-examined:

The story of punk and racism ... is thus one of selective anti-racism, casual racism, pseudo and genuine fascism naiveté, confusion and ambiguity – a story overlain by vast differences in experience in different parts of the country, and changes over time. (1999: 211)

An important contribution to the Birmingham school critique is Gelder's observation that, in Hebdige, 'the "dumbness" of punk haunts this otherwise spirited and sympathetic account [that is, *Subculture*], rather like the way the image of the lumpenproletariat haunts CCCS accounts of subcultures broadly speaking' (2007: 93). This aspect of punk's legacy is doubly problematic where it becomes the default characterisation for authors without direct knowledge of their subject. While Hebdige's *Subculture* has long been the subject of critique, it forms an important point of departure for thinking through punk beyond subcultural theory. It is worth noting, also, that Hebdige (1988) himself reflected upon his earlier work as duplicating the broader representation of punk, and the subculture model as a narrow analytic framework.

Before moving to a discussion of the post-subcultural and to Sydney punk subculture in particular, several criticisms directed at the Birmingham school model are worth briefly addressing; namely, its tendency towards sub/cultural holism, a lack of engagement in the field, and its distinctly anglocentric approach to subcultures.

Holism

The subcultural lifeworld is not a culturally bounded entity as people move in and inhabit many other worlds simultaneously. As Clarke noted, ‘the CCCS and Hebdige especially had over-emphasised subcultural difference, and in doing so ignored the more mundane features of people’s everyday lives’ (cited in Gelder 2007: 100). In this sense, subcultural theory shared with twentieth-century anthropology a desire ‘to demonstrate that the culture they were studying ... had an organic unity’ (Leach 2001: 55). Thus, the underlying assumptions of this aspect of subcultural theory are subject to the same criticism levelled at Geertz’s “Balinese”: ‘How can a whole people share a single subjectivity?’ (Crapanzano 1986: 74). That is, to view a subcultural formation as culturally homogeneous within itself or across different global sites is as problematic as looking for the structural-universal among traditional groups. ‘It might be more realistic,’ Ingold observes, ‘to say that people *live culturally* rather than that they *live in cultures*’ (2003: 330). In the post-Geertzian phase of new ethnography, the quest for a cultural internal coherence was unseated by what Clifford described as ‘the predominantly synecdochic rhetorical stance of the new ethnography [wherein] parts were assumed to be microcosms or analogies of wholes’ (1983: 125). In many ways this is true of much of the literature on punk, which moves to explain the subculture by means of various thematic foci: music, fashion, attitude, and so on.

Fieldwork

Although Hall reflected on cultural studies as ‘an “engaged” set of disciplines, addressing awkward but relevant issues about contemporary society and culture’ (1980: 4), criticism leveled at Hebdige concerned the fact that *Subculture* had little to

say about the punk lifeworld as *lived* by punks. Long on conjecture, this was observation from a distance rather than participatory, an account ‘stripped from the lived social context of experience’ (Nayak 2003: 26). The Birmingham school was light on real-world ethnographic fieldwork studies, with Willis’s (1978) study of bikers and hippies being perhaps the most cited of the exceptions. As Moore has pointed out, ‘these writers were notably silent about the subjective experience of everyday life as a member of one of these subcultures’ (1994: 1). As such, the use of ethnography was ‘not to elaborate or illustrate but to validate or confirm pre-ordained political positions’ (Huq 2006: 13). Hall (1980) goes some way to explain this as pressure from sociology to stay within the territorial boundary of analyses of contemporary society’s *textual* productions. Thus the school’s theoretical (rather than subjective) focus: ‘beyond an interest in “experience” for its own sake or for its own guarantee’ (Grimshaw, Hobson & Willis 1991: 62).

Anglocentrism

The notion of an internal coherence of subcultural formation was a logical outgrowth of aspects of the CCCS’s general theoretical position. The notion of a distinctly working-class culture was, by way of Hoggart (1957/2009), evident in the very foundations of the school’s establishment in 1964. It was problematised in Williams (1958/1960) and other originating texts, including E.P. Thompson’s seminal *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963/1980), and *The Long Revolution* (Williams 1961/1965), described by Hall (1980: 6) as having ‘shifted the whole ground of debate from a literary-moral to an anthropological definition of culture’. That is, from debates about the good and the bad in literary works – by which we come to read culture – to those of the culture of everyday life.

The main thrust of Hebdige's thesis concerned cultural change in the context of the post-war influx and settlement of immigrants in Britain, and in particular, his view of punk as in part 'a white "translation" of black "ethnicity"' (Hebdige 1979: 64).

Nonetheless, the idea of punk as first and foremost a working-class cultural formation persists in *Subculture*. In such a reading it is tempting to see punk as a reengagement with a lost or degraded pre-mass-mediated working-class culture, especially given the cultivation of a cultural history prototype in Elizabethan rogues and vagabonds (Gelder 2007: 5-26; Bauman 1996: 18-36). Adams takes the view that the archetypes of British punk may be understood 'as unlikely guardians of English heritage' to the extent that they were 'working in another "tradition" of dissenting, yet quintessentially English culture' (2008: 471, 474). That is, punk subculture is framed firstly within a historical tradition of dissent wherein it provides 'a quasi-nation, a sense of identity and belonging', 'a safe space in which individual expression and diversity could be given free reign' (Adams: 476, 477).

Just as Hoggart had differentiated an authentic folk creativity of the working class from bourgeois mass culture, Hebdige, as Clarke points out, was concerned 'only with the innovative punks, the "original" and "genuine" punks concentrated in the London area ... Hebdige's analysis of punk begins with a heat wave in Oxford Street and ends in a King's Road boutique' (cited in Bennett 2008: 421-22). To this extent, Hebdige perpetuated the notion of cultural capital in authenticity as localised, thus rendering all else peripheral and, by extension, inauthentic. This localisation in working-class London underpinned what was for many the dominant narrative of punk as having a single place of origin.

In the present study, the persistence of this narrative is borne out by a number of participants who saw a lesser significance in the first-wave punk moment in Sydney.

John Draper: I think in England it was more an attitude, and they had hard conditions there. Here, you could live on the dole and go surfing and enjoy yourself. It was the lucky country. No one was going to starve here or freeze to death. So we couldn't be the same angst-ridden punks. It was all too good; you had to make yourself angry, and we weren't.

Annie Barrett: I mean, we were pretend punks, because real punks were bred out of poverty in England ... we didn't come from the true punk, we came from the, you know, what we copied from England and what we copied from the Sex Pistols. Look, I remember a book came out, it was an English book, it was about punks, and it had that quote in the front that said some of us are in the gutter, some of us are just looking at the stars or whatever, and it was all pictures of punks, you know, like full-on punks – like compared to, you know, what we were ... just little punks.

In both these passages, the socio-economic conditions of English life establishes its authenticity. John's comment regarding angst and anger suggests the impossibility – or perhaps futility – of adopting what he had perceived as a primary element of punk authenticity. Annie's reference to 'full-on punks' suggests a relation between social conditions and style as constitutive of punk authenticity. In the following excerpt,

from a discussion between members of the first-wave Sydney band Rocks, the element of employment is identified as a further barrier to punk authenticity.

Bill Webb: Yeah but supposedly all those people, don't forget, had no money, had nowhere to live and everything. Life was just one big grey drab dreary existence. So it was like, Oh well –

Steve Vanderschoot: Rubbish piled up in the streets and all that sort of stuff.

Peter Davie: We weren't poor, we didn't grow up in a, in a poor environment or anything like that, we had fun when we were kids, we weren't sad.

Greg Morris: And we certainly weren't on the dole, were we.

BW: Oh no.

GM: We all had day jobs, so ...

As stated above, the Anglocentric view of punk was explicitly raised by only a minority of participants as having been a constraint, which, however, cannot guarantee its effects across the cohort as a whole. In this context, we can evaluate it only on the basis of its being contested by other participants. In early 1978 Rob moved to London where he was involved in the punk scene. He hadn't been aware of any punk presence in Sydney, perhaps as he was living in the outer Sydney suburb of

Blacktown at the time. After a year or so of living in the UK, Rob returned to Sydney in early 1979.

Rob Crasti: When I got back, my brother, younger brother, had told me that there's the Grand Hotel, they've got bands on there. I thought fucking beauty, so off I went, and I went, "this is excellent, this is great". In a lot of ways the Grand Hotel was far more wild than the London scene. They were all real punks. I'd had my experience in London, I come back to Sydney and what I saw were real punks. They weren't sort of a knock-off version. They were fair dinkum.

The notion of authenticity is a recurrent theme in punk literature. In the context of punk lifestyle authenticity may be seen as a form of subcultural capital (Thornton 1996) which also often refers to the notion of commitment while being true to oneself. Later punk variants such as 'hardcore' (Peterson 2009) and 'straight edge' (Haenfler 2006) are particularly exacting about authenticity, although most punk variants had and continue to have some criteria of authenticity. For a number of first-wave punks in Sydney, commitment to living a 24/7 punk lifestyle was a measure of authenticity which would arguably outweigh the dominant Anglocentric narrative.

A final criticism of the Birmingham school is its framing of subcultures as primarily youth formations. This has a number of shortfalls, among which concern the inability to account for new subcultural formations initiated outside of a youth demographic, and longer-term and intergenerational commitment and affiliation (Bennett 2006; Davis 2006). The CCCS, Thornton writes, 'ignored the *development* of subcultures,

considering them only when they were fully mediated and ripe for critical interpretation' (1996: 152). In terms of punk subculture, many of the social and political standpoints around which a cohort might coalesce are not necessarily rejected simply as adolescent (cf. Brake 1985), grown out of as one engages in the institutions of the wider society. Indeed, the present study suggests that the issues that concerned and consumed punks in the late 1970s are, for a number of the participants, nothing if not more urgent in the present day: there was certainly a sense among a number of participants that punks had been right in their views, and that punk subcultural affiliation had been justified.

Helen Carter: For me, and certainly for some of the people around me, it validated a different way of thinking, and I think that's about as good a social change as you can get.

John Clements: It never leaves you. I feel exactly the same. ... But the values we held have been proved right. This is the empowering thing, right?

Des Devlin: What do you mean by that?

JC: Like politicians are lying outrageously now, right? The environment is in such decline through gross and absolutely stupid consumerism, right, that can never be satisfied, that the planet is being eaten. I mean, we never foresaw that or anything but we knew this was going on and we refused to participate, right? ... So that's why I feel vindicated. Our, our so-called

nihilism was actually a positive thing. We were actually refusing to participate in something that was destructive, that was evil and wrong, you know, blind consumerism and buying music and manufactured pop culture and food and McDonalds. I mean, that's what we were rebelling against – like, everything! ... and that's why I feel vindicated 'cause you look now and you say, Well we were fucking right, you know?

The death and life of subculture

Critique of subculture has long focused on its inadequacy as an explanatory concept (e.g., Fine & Kleinman 1979). More recently the concept of post-subculture has served to encapsulate a growing repertoire of positions associated with the effects of late-capitalism and accelerated globalism: the collapse of the boundaries between subculture and mass culture; the 'greater heterogeneity' of values and activity-based group formation; the increasing diversity and fragmentation of cultural formations (Bennett 2002; Gelder 2007; Huq 2006; D. Moore 2004; Muggleton & Weinzierl 2003).

Of the post-subcultural texts concerned expressly with punk subculture, Clark's 'The Death and Life of Punk, the Last Subculture' (2003) situates punk as having become strategically discreet, that is, as having gone 'underground'. Clark sees this as a necessary move in response to corporate and mass media co-option: the culture industry had effectively neutralized early punk. His overriding claim is that punk in its spectacular form had to go underground in order for its more substantive ethico-political form to rise. Here, the old subcultural formation gives way to 'contemporary punk' which is 'now almost synonymous with the practice of anarchism' (Clark: 233),

articulated in movements such as anti-globalisation, anti-capitalism, EarthFirst!, Animal Liberation Front, Reclaim the Streets, and so on.

According to this proposition, punks now not only reject being labelled punk but refuse to be recognisable as punks. The assumption here is that the early Hebdige model of symbolic resistance is fully co-opted.

Decentralized, anti-hierarchical, mobile, and invisible, punk has become a loose assemblage of guerrilla militias. It cannot be owned; it cannot be sold. It upholds the principles of anarchism, yet it has no ideology. It is called punk, yet it has no name. (Clark 2003: 234)

This is not to say that spectacular punk has disappeared. On the contrary, punk is at once a widespread, fully commercialised market commodity and a continued formation of symbolic resistance. In terms of the present study, however, Clark's notion of the rejection of the punk label was certainly evident – and explicitly articulated – in first-wave punk in Sydney. For some at the Grand Hotel, the British spectacular aesthetic was a sign of inauthenticity and of succumbing to a mass-mediated caricature of punk.

John Draper: I do remember guys turning up and acting the part rather than enjoying it [the music and dancing] ... It was a funny sort of transition where it then changed into a scene, and you'd see guys who'd deliberately got a nice shirt and put some razor blade cuts into it and then put safety pins to hold it together.

So I don't know if you could actually go out and buy any punk gear as you could in England, but there were enough photos around I guess ... they would have got enough ideas about how you were supposed to dress. They just didn't know what it was all about. They had the fashion ... and they thought they had the attitude. They just forgot about the music, and why you do it. And we just thought that was rather funny, that they seemed to be acting a part. Because we were just enjoying it, and it just seemed so foreign to us.

For others, however, the imported punk aesthetic was adopted in the spirit of carnivale and pranksterism.

John Clements: I remember [another punk] saying to me – and he was from that scene, and he'd been integral in that scene ... all the way through – and I remember him mocking this new punk thing to me at the Grand one night, saying “Oh, look at these idiots, you know, fancy dress up”. And I was, you know, I was quite upset because I loved it. But that division was there even in, within the punk scene. ...

And it was so outrageous, and that's what I loved about it, right? It was so outrageous 'cause society was so conservative back in those days, especially in Sydney, you know, much different to London. I mean we were still like 1950s compared to that. So, it was the idea of dressing in a clown suit. It was Dada art form, you know? It was living art. It was

performance art, you know?

If the punk label was rejected, at least by some, as an introduced or exogenous construct replicated by local media, it may also account in part for the diverse musical interests of the Grand Hotel cohort, reflected in its bands whose influences ranged from 1950s and 1960s Australian, British and American roots rock 'n' roll and rockabilly to US protopunk, garage punk and contemporary British punk.

The main point here then is that the rejection of the punk label and the refusal to conform to a recognisable, mass-mediated concept of punk were both played out in the strategies of early punk subculture in Sydney. Contradictions such as this one do not discount the need for reconceptualisations of punk and the notion of subculture to negotiate various cultural formations but, rather, highlight punk as an inherently contested and heterogeneous field.

The discourse of derivation

One Saturday night in early February 1978 a reporter from the *Sydney Morning Herald* visited the Grand Hotel and watched two bands, Blackrunner and Tommy and the Dipsticks. She later recounted with a measure of disappointment and derision that the most 'punk' act she witnessed that evening was one band member pouring beer over another. That the journalist was unimpressed by the experience suggests there was an expectation based on a preconception of what punk was, and what it ought to look like – that perhaps the punk experience would be much more charged and dangerous than this, more of a spectacle. These were the received ideas of the day.

The reporter was equally unimpressed by the audience: ‘When we first walked into the small and relatively dingy lounge, only about 15 people were there, all looking disappointingly normal’ (Tabakoff 1978). Sydney punks were in appearance and behaviour unlike those in London, as seen on TV or read about in the UK press. Sydney punks did not appear as a subculture should.

By late 1978, the same newspaper carried a colour piece about a Sydney hairdresser who explained that ‘the “punk” approach to hair, clothes, jewellery and make-up has been slow to reach Australia’ (Muhvich 1978). But if Sydney punks were not flashy enough, by early 1979, they were not suffering enough either. *Puberty Blues* authors Kathy Lette and Gabrielle Carey, whose satirical column ran in Sydney’s *Sun-Herald* under the byline of the ‘Salami Sisters’, announced that,

The Australian economic climate can never support a true punk movement because we’re too rich. ... In England, punk rock is a working-class revolution. In Australia, punk rock is mostly a middle-class trend. (Lette & Carey 1979)

Recuperation, Hebdige observed, follows a two-pronged strategy: ‘the way in which subcultures are represented in the media makes them both more *and less* exotic than they actually are. They are seen to contain both dangerous aliens and boisterous kids, wild animals and wayward pets’ (1979: 97). In the print press, such a strategy is articulated with moral panic-angled stories in the news pages, and lifestyle and fashion stories in the feature and lift-out pages. This is the procession of co-option to which, as noted above, a post-subcultural sensibility responds.

I would argue, additionally, that strategies of recuperation may also be situated within a discourse of derivation. In the context of punk in Sydney, the subculture was understood not as having articulated a localised or endogenous form, but in terms only of a lack or absence, as less than the received model.

In cultural studies, and its sociological antecedents, subcultural formation was situated in an analytic framework of deviance and labelling and, later, within larger strategies of recuperation which simultaneously exoticised and familiarised. In the next chapter I explore techniques of othering in mostly anthropologically-oriented ethnography. Such strategies are deployed within relations of power that situate an “other” as spatio-temporally asynchronous and culturally distinct.

Chapter 3

ETHNOGRAPHY

*your present is their future ...
and their future is your past.*

Arjun Appadurai

At the outset of this study my understanding of ethnography was not reconciled in relation to my research. The research setting, with its focus on the Grand Hotel milieu, appeared to belong to a generation past whereas ethnography was a methodology of the present, the emerging, and the new, dominated by observation in a real-world setting. Ethnography, Leach asserts (2001: 50), ‘records what has been directly observed by the ethnographer; it refers to the present.’ As such, my approach was undertaken with a sense of discovery but also one of methodological uncertainty.

This discussion of ethnography therefore proceeds from the initial problematic of my research focus to a discussion of three areas of inquiry – temporality, spatiality, and fieldwork. I present a critical appraisal of relevant aspects of ethnography and discuss particularly anthropologically-oriented ethnographic practices which have been deeply implicated in the production of regimes of colonisation. The rationale for that discussion is to provide a sense of some of the areas of discovery and working-through in the research, as well as to explore the porous borders of the ideological and the methodological in ethnographic practice.

The temporal

What became apparent early in the interviewing phase of the study was that, while discussion was centred on matters of the 1970s, the interview setting constituted a large part of the research field. This became all the more apparent as each new video interview was viewed and assessed. Participants recalled events in a present setting by reference to a past. Cultural knowledge as memory was expressed in a temporal present. As Auge observed, the participant,

is somebody having a conversation, who tells us less about the past than about what he knows or thinks about the past. He is not contemporary with the event he narrates ... The informant's account says as much about the present as it does about the past. (1995: 9)

Reconceptualising the field in this way placed a greater emphasis on the research setting. While the focus of the study remained the story of a particular time and place in the past, situating the setting in a temporal present effectively shifted its focal point towards participants' articulation and expression of memory. Situating the research setting in a spatio-temporal present, however, led to the question of how 'present' is constituted in ethnographic discourse, which, given the visual dimension of the research, needed to be considered in the context of its effects in mediation and representation.

Wagner (1981: 17) posited that, in the 'two distinct worlds of meaning and action', which comprise the ethnographer's field, culture is invented. In essence, the interpretation of culture is refracted through the ethnographer as the agent of his or her

own culture: ‘a set of [subject-culture] impressions is re-created as a set of [researcher-culture] meanings’ (Wagner: 19). In what is viewed as the distinctly different world of the observed, the ethnographer makes ‘cultural relativist claims about basic thought-forms, such as time’ (Gell 1992: 79). Time may appear to the ethnographer as experienced differently across cultures but, as Gell (1992) has argued, these are processes that happen *in* time rather than of time: ‘There is no fairyland where people experience time in a way that is markedly unlike the way in which we do ourselves, where there is no past, present and future, where time stands still, or chases its own tail, or swings back and forth like a pendulum’ (Gell: 315).

The ethnographic record has been deeply implicated in the temporal othering of its subject. Forms of ethnographic practice, particularly those deployed within anthropology, have served to perpetuate the mythical constructs of ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Fabian 1983; Leach 2001) across ‘modern’ and ‘premodern’ or traditional lifeworlds (Latour 1993). Such categories were, in part, the result of an ideological production of time instrumentalised in ethnographic practice – or, more correctly, certain epistemological assumptions underpinning that practice. The inscription (writing up) phase of ethnographic production is open to what Geertz (1973: vi) described as ‘a bit of a sleight of hand’, and Fabian ‘a conjuring trick’ (1983: xi). Here, the production of the ethnographic text is a narrative construct to distance the subject from the researcher. This objectification takes place by writing out of the text the ‘coevalness’ experienced in the field. For Fabian, the denial of coevalness follows ‘a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the producer of anthropological discourse’ (1983: 31). Specifically, denial of coevalness is written into the text by way of narrative devices and constructs such as the

ethnographic present. Thus, a fundamental contradiction in ethnography is that it presents as a methodology premised on field relations in which a closeness to data and an intimacy with the social world of the observed are imperative while, at the same time, it produces discourses of spatio-temporal alterity with real-world historical and political consequences. To the extent that these are intentional devices deployed with a common purpose of subjugation (Bourgois 2002; Fabian 1983; Graeber 2004; Rosaldo 1993), such productions bear the hallmarks of the type referred to in Benjamin's observation that 'there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism' (1969: 256).

The production of ideological forms of temporality underpins modernism's conception of epochal time, which, for Latour, remains the dominant form inasmuch as we continue to divide up time 'only in terms of successive revolutions' (1993: 46). While premodern lifeworlds and modes of production and exchange may coexist with modernism in its view of history, they do so as salvage, or as fossilised – which, as Sahlins observed (1993: 25), results 'mainly by a way of knowing that abstracted them from life and history.' By 'way of knowing' Sahlins refers to the epistemological assumptions that inform ethnography's othering practices. Ethnography as a mode of inscription and representation is distinguished from ideological contingencies, and again from the fields in which it constructs its discourse.

Symmetry and contemporaneity occur in the shared present of experience. In the ethnographic present, however, inscription, as modally distinct from experience, is never symmetrical (Fabian: 1983). Ethnography's contradiction may therefore be

characterised in the first instance as a disjuncture in communication modalities between, on the one hand, the field as the site of experience, interaction, and (tacit) cultural knowledge and, on the other, of interpretation, inscription, and ultimately abstraction. This contradiction in ethnography forms a major part of a larger hermeneutical question concerning the representation of what is essentially an ontological category. In other words, what is referred to as the crisis of representation may be viewed in terms of a modal dichotomy: ethnography as a mode of discovery and representation vis-à-vis lived experience in the world as a mode of being. On that basis, lifeworlds encountered in the field can only ever be *referenced* in the productions of ethnography. There is no transmodality of the domains of presence and representation; and it is here that the ethnographic present is differentiated from the ontological present.

For Dilthey, the present is the ‘fulfilled totality of life’ to be distinguished from the past and future, which ‘are formed only by means of representation. Indeed, they exist only in inner representations, in part as memory, in part as images of something that will subsequently become reality’ (1989: 387). If past and future are representations, their respective qualities might also be differentiated as such. That is, the future-as-representation is only ever an image of emergence, ‘linked by expectation and potentiality’ (Bruner 1986a: 8). The past-as-representation, however, is present-become-past, wherein traces of the ‘totality of life’ are encoded – if only to the extent that transference is possible across modes of representation and being, or put another way, that representation carries and reflects ontological traces. As Bruner has noted, Dilthey maintained that life was a temporal flow which can never be experienced directly ‘because every observed moment is a remembered moment. Temporal

succession cannot be experienced as such because the very observation of time fixes our attention and interrupts the flow of experience' (1986a: 8).

The present may be viewed then as a contiguity of modes of experience and representation. Representations of the past, which are recomposed as memory, are the products of what Auge calls oblivion (2004). Traces that are encoded as memory are done so against a continual life force of destruction and re-creation. That which is presented in the world is of necessity largely discarded: 'We must forget in order to remain present' (Auge 2004: 89). That which remains is selectively encoded and constitutes our autobiographical memory, our temporal sense of self. In the ethnographic present, Hastrup notes, 'experience has become memory before it becomes text' (1992: 123). Moreover, the ethnographic present is subject to multiple displacements of temporality. To work backwards, even from the point of interview transcription, is to mediate several generations of representation, which, in the present study, may be expressed as the textualisation of recordings of recompositions of memory, which are the encoded representations of experience.

In terms of the question of temporal displacement in this study, the research setting was reconceptualised as occurring in a present wherein participants reflect on a past, articulated in a present by way of memory. That present, the present of the field and of experience, when mediated by the researcher, becomes a present recomposed in and for the modality of representation. The series of temporal displacements which occurs prior to transcription continues through data analysis and audiovisual development wherein a present-in-representation is constructed. This aspect of temporality situates the study in a present and within the purview of ethnography.

The spatial

The ethnographic production of asymmetrical temporalities has its corollary in spatial conceptions of the field. Space in ethnography has been closely associated with fieldwork contexts, from the interpersonal to the geographical. The remoteness of the field itself has long been part of the currency of ethnography. The study of cultural distinctiveness at physically remote sites continues to have a cachet within anthropological-oriented ethnography despite major epistemological shifts towards deterritorialisation and multi-sitedness (Falzon 2009; Marcus 1995; Van Maanen 2006) as well as symmetry and contemporaneity (Auge 1995; Fabian 1983, 2006; Latour 1993).

Wolcott (2007: 32) argues that ethnography's defining characteristic, 'the one that sets it apart from all other qualitative approaches', resides in its ability to produce knowledge from sustained and intimate field relations, that is, in the duration of time and a closeness to its subject. Certain qualities of interiority are conducive to 'perspective taking' in interaction such as closeness of rapport and depth of immersion. These are characterised in terms of intimacy and closeness which, however, require a certain degree of spatial tempering. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 90) caution against feeling 'at home' or 'surrendering' to the field: 'There must always remain some part held back, some social and intellectual 'distance'. For it is in the space created by this distance that the analytic work of the ethnographer gets done.' Thus, analytic space is equated with the 'sense of being a stranger', and to lose that sense is to lose one's critical distance. Debates in feminist research have centred on ethical aspects of distance and a concern for participant exploitation

(Stacey 1988) to which Oakley contrasts closer personal involvement and intimacy wherein the researcher 'is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship' (2003: 252). Irwin, however, questions the usefulness of the distance-intimacy binary altogether since her research suggests 'intimacy can be even more damaging and problematic than objectivity' (2006: 170).

Moreover, the space of field relations is itself not unproblematically interactional but rather situational: 'What the informants tell us (their "others") in the ethnographic dialogue is spoken not from the centre of their world but from the liminal space of the cultural encounter' (Hastrup 1992: 120). If interactional spaces are thus decentred by the situational effects of the researcher, ethnography's preserve of cultural knowledge is not, ipso facto, unsustainable; rather, it is the realist assumptions that are placed (further) in doubt. This indicates the shift in ethnography from a focus on cultural knowledge as truth-in-observation in a fixed field to one of cultural knowledge as situational. Ethnography more recently thus encompasses cultural knowledge as inclusive of tacit expressions of the performative and the rhetorical and of what Appadurai (1996) calls the 'force of the imagination' at work in cultural encounters.

Whereas temporal othering relies on the production of asymmetry by inscription, spatial othering relies on the production of space as a bounded field delineating cultural distinction. Certain spaces may be othered when deemed outside of dominant modes of production. Commons are enclosed; lands declared uninhabited or as non-productive are expropriated by colonising regimes. It was in the production of such ideological spaces that the project of 'total ethnography' pursued knowledge of cultural formations as 'the complete description of another culture or society' (Marcus

& Cushman 1982: 31). Here, cultures were conceived of 'as complete wholes: universes of meaning, of which the individuals and groups inside them are just an expression, defining themselves in terms of the same criteria, the same values and the same interpretation procedures' (Auge 1995: 33).

Globalisation (the acceleration of globalism) has become a principal focus of ethnographic inquiry, particularly in relation to its effects on localised cultural formations. For Marcus, the view of globalisation as a culturally homogenising force remains 'more credible than ever before', but outmoded 'in terms of spatio-temporal cultural preserves of otherness' (1986: 167). The problematic of globalisation was addressed in the form of, among others, a multi-sited ethnography, which Marcus explains as a procedure that follows and stays 'with the movements of a particular group of initial subjects' (1995: 106). Multi-sited research, Falzon (2009: 2) observes, 'proceeds by a series of juxtapositions in which the global is collapsed into and made an integral part of parallel, related local situations, rather than something monolithic or external to them.'

In the ideological and technological strategies of globalisation, local spaces produce outward flows of populations in 'diasporas of hope, diasporas of terror, and diasporas of despair' (Appadurai 1996: 6) towards destinations which are themselves subject to identical tensions. Globalisation however does not immediately imply the inevitability of a homogenous 'world culture' (Auge 1995). Unlike in other forms of colonisation its effects are not simply centrifugal but multifarious and disjunctive. At any given smaller-scale polity,

there is always a fear of cultural absorption by polities of larger scale, especially those that are nearby ... [to the effect that] the simplification of these many forces (and fears) of homogenization can also be exploited by nation-states in relation to their own minorities, by posing global commoditization (or capitalism, or some other such external enemy) as more real than the threat of its own hegemonic strategies. (Appadurai 1996: 32)

Thus globalisation may be represented as originating locally and adjacently. The dystopia of the hegemonic globalisation narrative stands in contrast to the micronarratives of agency where the dominant narrative is challenged on at least two counts: firstly, in the decentred, multinodal formations of globalisation, and secondly, in the localisation and indigenisation of its effects (Ginsburg 1995; Michaels 1994; Sahlins 1993). Such challenges take the form of unintended and aberrant readings which give rise to unpredictable and subversive responses. Such responses of ‘irrationality, absurdity, rupture, contradiction ... are all mirrors of distortion, angles from which are exposed the logic of oppressive signs and reigning hegemonies’ (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992: 16).

Conceptualisations of the spatial in ethnography offer insight into understandings of place and cultural self-concept. The discourse of derivation (as discussed in Chapter 2) is an effect of cultural distinction in the ideological production of space. Sydney’s punk moment occurred on the cusp of colonial and globalisation narratives with their respective conceptualisations of place. A number of the participants in this study were drawn to London because it had represented, among other things, a temporal present.

By virtue of its distance from a perceived centre, and by its temporal asymmetry of communications (of ideas, of culture), Sydney was viewed as ‘out of time’ – in a sense, existing in a kind of colonial time, neither modern (symmetrical and contemporaneous) nor premodern (‘traditional’). The experience of a number of participants who left Sydney for London in the late 1970s was that of disappointment and marginalisation. While it would be difficult to attribute any single causal factor to this experience, some participants suggested that it was their expatriate status which contributed to their sense of estrangement. Since early colonisation, such experiences have been a constant among expatriate Australians in Britain. Denning (1996) characterises that sense of estrangement in aesthetic terms:

The changed accent and vocabulary, the social awkwardness, the unstylishness of dress and behaviour marginalised the colonials as somewhat strange ... Colonials are always grotesque because they lie in the liminal space between being stylishly modern and nostalgically antique. (Denning: 123)

Leaving Sydney for London was, for many participants, a response to the perception of cultural stasis in 1970s Australia. Some expatriate participants, having been migrants to Australia, were returning ‘home’, whereas others, like many Australians before them, were open to the opportunities London might bring (Alomes 1999; Wilcox 2004).

The trope of European Australians as a culturally isolated or ‘stranded’ has been a constant since the early days of European invasion. For Karskens, such narratives are

the product of history as a political act: ‘a device of elision [which] conceals experience and silences debate’ (2002: 791). By recovering the perspectives of ‘the mass of mainly obscure people of the lower orders’, Karskens (1997: 89) challenges the dominant ‘gaol town’ narrative on which the stranded trope continues to rely. As Griffiths notes, Australians are now ‘breaking down the old imperial image of “the Tyranny of distance” and are questioning their assumed history of isolation and containment’ (2001: 23). This may be attributed to, in part, the localisation and indigenisation of the effects of globalisation.

The field

The notion of an anthropology brought home from the tropics was alluded to, if only by way of a footnote, by Geertz in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), where he writes,

anthropology *can* be trained on the culture of which it is itself a part, and it increasingly is; a fact of profound importance, but which, as it raises a few tricky and rather special second order problems, I shall put to the side for the moment. (Geertz: 14)

In *Participant Observation*, Spradley (1980: 15) noted that ‘the value of ethnography in understanding our own society was often overlooked.’ These instances precede the convergence of ethnological work being undertaken in sites ‘here’ and ‘elsewhere’, as identified by Auge (1995: 7).

While urban and social ethnography had long been practised in other disciplines, particularly sociology, anthropology seemed to continue to exhaust its internal spatio-cultural logics until the convergence of ‘diverse tendencies in culture analysis’ (Marcus 2007: 1129), social research practices, and the effects of globalisation brought about a recognition that one ethnographer’s ‘elsewhere’ is another’s ‘here’. Thus, traditional concerns in ethnography were overtaken by its embrace of a globally interactional field and, by extension, the problematic of its own de-territorialisation (Rabinow, Marcus, Faubion & Rees 2008; Van Maanen 2006). An ethnography of ‘elsewhere’ is now undertaken in order to ascertain the interconnecteness of a site or sites within a global structuration no longer culturally circumscribed but heterogeneous and, as suggested above, constitutive of agency. Ethnographic inquiry, in other words, converged as the anthropology of the ‘elsewhere’ became a localised field of inquiry while ‘at-home’ ethnography or the anthropology of the ‘here’ recognised that ‘Western capitalism in its totality is a truly exotic cultural scheme, as bizarre as any other’ (Sahlins 1993: 12). If the fieldwork trope, with its origins in Malinowski, continues to mark a work as ethnography, it does so after the decoupling of ethnographic practice from, firstly, its spatio-temporal moorings of asymmetry and observation, or what Clifford called ‘the hegemony of fieldwork’ (1983: 120), and, secondly, from its culturally demarcated preserves. Fieldwork now proceeds from myriad transactional terrains – artefactual, discursive, processural, cybernetic, post-human, microbial, virtual, and so on – and is deployed by a diversity of practitioners, from philosophers and cultural theorists to historians and artists (Fabian 2006). In contemporary ethnographic practice, Burrell argues, the field site is a heterogeneous network, which is ‘in certain ways constructed rather than discovered’ (2009: 182).

Such shifts in the conceptualisation of the field also necessarily transfigure methodological certainty (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992; Law 2004).

In Sherry Ortner's ethnography, *New Jersey Dreaming: Capital, Culture, and the Class of '58* (2003), the field setting is constituted neither in the temporal past of the late 1950s nor in the spatial setting of a New Jersey school but, rather, in the present of her participants' homes and workplaces. Ortner's negotiation of this dispersal of what she calls 'postcommunity' was inspiring as it helped me to work through the spatio-temporal problematics of my own study. In the early phase of her 10-year study, Ortner describes having experienced a kind of methodological anxiety in relation to the lack of observation in her research: 'I was very uncomfortable with the fact that the project was so heavily dependent on interviewing, and involved so little participant observation' (1997: 67). That the researcher's anxiety should stem from a perceived lack of observation arguably suggests a prevailing realist legacy of truth-in-observation as the epistemological foundations of field studies (Lofland & Lofland 1995). While 'relinquishing the "classic" method of anthropology', Schwartz (1998: 16) remarked, what preserves Ortner's 'anthropological integrity is her way of representing the fieldwork method, zipping in and off the freeways into her former classmates' living rooms and workplaces.' In other words, while the anthropological is no longer governed by the strictures of method, it continues to derive an integrity from the trope of the traveler-researcher 'being there' which, as Nichols (1994: 68) notes, is a 'powerful guarantee' of ethnographic authority, and no less so in a multi-sited field.

There is a distinction to be made, then, between the *focus* and the *setting* of the ethnographic field. Conventional ethnographic fieldwork might typically involve observation of social action whose research focus and setting are coeval. By contrast, ethnographic fieldwork that investigates reflection on past moments presupposes a *distance* between the focus and the setting of the research. In such ethnography, the terrain of the field is concerned with the contingencies of meaning and memory.

For Halbwachs, memories are composed anew with each retelling with elements preceding and following the event introduced into its recomposition: reflections are constructed ‘through an effort of reasoning’ which, by seeking greater coherence, distorts the past (1992: 183). Additionally, this reasoning process then ‘chooses among the store of recollections, eliminates some of them, and arranges the others according to an order conforming with our ideas of the moment’ (Halbwachs: 183). Thus it is that memories are transformed to make sense in and for a present context, which suggests both selective discarding and a certain *fictive* reimagining in the recomposition of new memory.

In the documentary *Riding the Rails* (Uys & Lovell 1997) participants reflect on their experiences living and traveling on freight trains as teenagers during the Great Depression. The interval between the research focus and research setting ranges from around 55 to almost 70 years. The film’s setting is also spatially displaced as its site of investigation is the United States rail network of the 1930s, its carriages and its stations. The distance between the research focus and the research setting nonetheless remains within *living* memory. In this documentary, any emphasis on facticity, on truth and accuracy in recall, is overshadowed by the meaning participants ascribe to

their recollections. Whereas the meaningful and often emotional effects were of the present, the memories were traces which remained intact and yet transformed with each recomposition.

In the present study, a number of participants were concerned that the distance between the research focus and present setting might be too great. Implicit here is the concern that their recollections may not be accurate given the moment being discussed occurred over three decades previous. I found it difficult to disagree with the idea that greater distance would result in less reliability and accuracy of recall as I too had doubts about the reliability of my own memory of that time. However, unfalsifiable accuracy was not the aim of the research; rather, my interest was in exploring what participants retained and what continued to be meaningful for them in their present social world.

The visual

When Freud remarked that technology had transformed us into ‘a kind of prosthetic God’ (1930/1962: 38-39), he was referring to the use of instruments such as the camera and the gramophone as artificial extensions of memory. In the ethnographic field, the digital videocamera has become one such apparatus of prosthetic memory as it appears to deliver a combined truth-in-observation and reproducibility of data which challenges the authority of the ethnographer as research instrument (cf. Mead 1995; Brady 1999). The use of digital video would seem to encroach on many of the functions of ethnographic practice, not least the recording, retention and retrieval of data which, in bypassing consciousness, displaces subjective memory (Leslie 2003). Technologies of reproducibility would also appear to disrupt the *fictive* in

ethnography, that is, the space in which the vagaries and contingencies of memory are transformed. Such a view, however, assumes a transparent representation of reality actualised in video technology. Video, as with film, ‘invents the fantasy of a nontechnologized reality’ (Russell 1999: 8). This seduction of the screen as an objective mirror into the world of the other is a technology of repression and alienation (Barbash & Taylor 1997: 59-60). The reflexive turn in ethnography was one strategy deployed to counter the hegemony of transparent representation (Ruby 1980).

In the present study, a visual-ethnographic approach to the research subject was well suited because I was interested in presenting archival audio and visual materials as well as interviews with participants. The videocamera was initially thought of as a discreet, functional device by which to record field interviews. However, as Pink has noted, the visual ought not be viewed ‘simply as a mode of recording data or illustrating text, but as a medium through which new knowledge and critiques may be created’ (2001: 11). Although a comparatively small and unobtrusive unit, I had not anticipated its impact on the dynamics of the setting. The presence of a camera in the research setting may precipitate a kind of performance which, as Henley observes (2004: 109), ‘can be highly revealing, bringing to light aspects of personal identity, attitude, belief or fantasy that could otherwise remain hidden or unexpressed.’

As a cursory observation, most participants expressed a high level of awareness of digital video and its potential reach and effects as a networked communications technology, which was not unexpected. This digital literacy or sensibility manifested not so much in performing for the camera as for an anticipated audience: the cohort.

There were occasions when a participant might address the camera directly, where comments referring to past events were directed at certain individuals. The camera here becomes a means of communication across a dispersed cohort towards an anticipated convergence in the video work, perhaps to be distributed widely – in contrast, that is, to written research which might suggest a more limited dissemination.

As an example of the effects of the camera's presence in the research setting, one participant, Annie, expresses a kind of double performativity, which also illustrates the complexity of audience reception. For Annie, the notion of punk as having been a working-class response restricts the possibility for an authentic punk subculture to have occurred in Australia. Annie makes the comment directly to camera that Sydney punks were 'pretending', which is followed with the qualifier: 'I'm probably insulting a few people by saying that'. Annie's comments – acknowledged as potentially bursting bubbles and perhaps insulting a few people – are consistent with punk's sensibility of provocation. 'The performative sensibility', Denzin (2009: 217) observes, 'turns interviews into performance texts.... It turns interviewees into performers, into persons whose words and narratives are then performed by others.' Performed, that is, in its decoding by the reader/viewer. Thus, to read only the content of Annie's statement would be to misinterpret its larger communicative effect, which requires us to read also what the statement is *doing*, in its performative aspects, communicated towards the dispersed cohort.

Principles in video production

In the present study, the approach to the use of video in the field was not motivated by cinematographic objectives. The camera used recorded at broadcast-quality standard-definition resolution and in native 4:3 format, which conformed to much of the digitally transferred archival 8mm film footage. The interview sessions required a short time to set-up the camera, arrange lighting, and take white-balance readings before recording. As interviews were conducted mostly in interior spaces, artificial lighting, in the form of halogen work lamps, was used, though as the interview phase of the research progressed, available and natural light sources were preferred. Only minimal consideration was given to notions of the filmic and the cinematic in the research setting. This approach was informed by a number of theoretical and practice-oriented perspectives on production, which, although diverse in origin, overlapped and converged in a number of areas.

Ethnographic filmmaking

Ethnographic filmmaking, Ruby asserts, conflicts with ‘the reasonable expectations of professional filmmakers, who must maintain their professional reputations and realize revenue from their activities’ (2000: 18). The focus and objective of production here was scholarly. This approach rejects film production as a for-profit enterprise within the film industry. Ethnographic films produced under these conditions are constrained by the demands of commerce: they ‘must have the “look” of a “good” film and realize the greatest possible profit’ (Ruby: 21). As with the printed word, film is a medium of communication involved in the mediation and representation of cultural knowledge. Ruby here is mostly concerned with ethnographic film as a medium of transmitting

anthropological understanding. That is not to say, however, that, as academia is not without its own constraints, most ethnographic filmmaking is undertaken in ‘extra-institutional’ environments (Nichols 1994); nor is it to say that ethnographic filmmaking does not or should not have a commercial, popular appeal. The early ethno-fictions of Flaherty, for example, were popular at the box office (Marks 1995), and many ethnographic films have had some success in limited release, from *The Highlands Trilogy* of Connolly and Anderson (1983, 1988, 1992) to *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey* (Dunn, McFadyen & Wise 2005). Nonetheless, the approach to film production as a scholarly undertaking and a means to research with knowledge outcomes was certainly a critical influence on the approach I took to video production. (Video distribution is further discussed in Chapter 6.)

Punk productions

Countering the commercial constraints on creative expression and autonomy in production has become part of a general understanding of the punk Do-It-Yourself (DIY) ethic. The DIY ethic forms part of the bedrock of punk authenticity. Punk productions have mostly been discussed in the context of the music industry and punk musical producers’ efforts to carve out a space in which to test DIY economics against the boundaries of the dominant mode of production (O’Connor 2008; Thompson 2004a, 2004b). For punk music to be punk, Thompson (2004a) asserts, it must be produced, distributed, and performed ‘with little or no specialized training, without prohibitive financial investments, and without ties to corporate investors’ (48). The notion of a ‘punk cinema’ must meet the same criteria in production, distribution, and exhibition (Thompson: 49).

In the area of film and video there have been a number of non-studio productions related to punk that are less concerned with commercial imperatives than they are with the preservation and dissemination of cultural knowledge within a punk-subcultural discourse. These typically small-budgeted productions are often concerned with the promotion of obscure or little-known bands and band members, or the examination of variants in the typology of punk. How punk manifests in localised contexts is also a focus of a number of these productions (Alexander 2007; Dluzak & Piefke 2010; Gorman 2008; Jones & Maas 2012; Lake 2002). The focus on place emerged as a major area of interest in my research, particularly in how participants expressed and interpreted their understandings of punk as either continuous with their self-concept prior to exposure to punk (endogenous), or as the adoption of a punk identity, typically from the UK or the US, discovered by way of a friend, a family member, or the media (exogenous). Subcultures have a local specificity: external influences are ‘mixed in with locally distinct cultures which have their own histories’ (Massey 1998: 29). (Place in analysis and video construction is further discussed in Chapter 5.)

Grounded theory

In the grounded theory of Glaser (2004, 2012), the concept of readiness concerns the writing up of sorted memos into theory. Although the concept relates to a more technical aspect of the grounded theory process, I found one aspect of the principle applicable in a more general sense. Among the barriers to readiness is ‘worrisome accuracy’ (Glaser 2004, 2012). Here, accuracy in grounded theory does not constrain writing-up as it does in qualitative data analysis; grounded theory is more concerned with conceptualisation than it is with description and requirements for accuracy. I

found this aspect of grounded theory useful in my approach to production, namely, the development themes which are not bound by imperatives of accuracy or finality but, rather, conceptually substantive and at the same time contestable. For example, the segment 'Polis' does not aim to be a 'correct' or exhaustive characterisation of punk-subcultural politics. It does, however, aim to be substantive in that it encapsulates the diverse and often conflicting positions of participants.

Open source

The open source approach to the development and distribution of cultural productions was also influential in my approach. The open source model is based on a collaborative approach to product development whereby versions are iteratively released for testing, review and modification. This model is contrasted to the monolithic, proprietary model which restricts innovation and knowledge-sharing under copyright licensing and patent laws (Raymond 2001). The open source approach to production is akin to the iterative processes of grounded theory whereby the researcher repeatedly cycles through data collection and analysis until a point of saturation is reached. Open source also shares in a broad sense the principle in punk production that promotes freedom of expression, creativity and accessibility over commercial and professional imperatives.

Ideas from a number of areas were thus influential in my approach to video production. (Chapter 5 gives a detailed account of how the video component of this study was constructed through data analysis.) The following section discusses the phase when intensive focus was given to the video research as a visual product. Data analysis produced a series of thematic categories which had a degree of narrative

richness and depth. The next stage of video production involved the integration of visual material which would further contextualise the data.

Visual saturation of data

The outcome of the data analysis phase of the research consisted of a series of thematic segments loosely linked or segued with additional interview materials, which I came to regard as the backbone of the video. By this stage I had assembled a digital archive of audio and visual materials comprised of 8mm film, photographs and graphics, and audio artefacts sourced from the participants and others of the cohort.

The objective of integrating these materials was to further ground the video, that is, to tie the interview narrative closer to the material data and the context to which it refers. Much of this process was performed intuitively rather than through coding and analysis, and followed a general strategy of using materials produced only by the cohort. I made the decision early in the study not to use materials sourced from outside of the cohort in order to minimise the effects of mediation. The rationale for this strategy was to underpin its descriptive and emic properties consistent with the overall visual-ethnographic approach of the research. In this phase I adapted the grounded theory concept of theoretical sampling as a way to conceptualise the process of visually developing and ‘thickening’ the data (Geertz 1973). When integrated in this way, the segments became narratively and visually richer, giving the video more of a sense of continuity and accessibility.

The visual-ethnographic production developed as a series of segments or vignettes is evident at least as early as Wright’s *Song of Ceylon* (1934), a British film set out in a four-part structure, running to 38 minutes in length. Structurally, the film is cyclical as

the fourth segment returns, in a kind of coda, to the themes of the first. The closing of beginning to end suggests cyclical time, evident also in such mythical motifs as the wheel of life and the ouroboros. In both the opening and closing shots of the film the camera pans across a tropical jungle floor, a chiaroscuro of palm leaves pierced by sunlight from the canopy above. These shots signify ‘our’ entering and exiting colonised time and space as the opening shot pans right, and the closing left. Yet, despite these filmic othering devices, *Song of Ceylon* challenges the anthropological notion of stasis and timelessness as the filmmaker incorporates elements of the commercial and material along with the transcendent. This presents not so much a salvage ethnography, or a discovery documentary designed to evoke ‘wonder’ (Nichols 1994: 103), as it does a ‘tribute to a culture whose shape and movement are being irrevocably changed by modernization and colonization’ (Jayamanne 2001: 65).

Case study presentation of thematic categories

As music was a driving factor in 1970s punk subculture and a large part of its appeal for many of the participants, I had expected a sizeable proportion of the data to be related to the topic. Many members of the 40 or so bands that performed at the Grand Hotel were interviewed for this study. Some of these bands formed for only one night or a few nights while others pursued it as a more serious concern. Since this study focuses on the social aspects of affiliation, I sought an approach that would emphasise the sociality of music production and performance. I chose to present this dimension of punk subculture in three case studies of bands who played during the three main phases of the Grand Hotel operating as a punk venue.

The three case studies were developed during the data analysis and video production phase of the study. Case study development differed from that of the other main thematic segments of the video in that a greater emphasis was given to participants' background and life story, which provided context for their experience in music production and performance. Combining aspects of case study methodology provided a means to render a large amount of data in a form that integrated well with the representational strategy of the video – that is, a series of thematically constructed segments or vignettes. The focus on detail in this approach reshaped the contours of the video's overarching ethnographic form in allowing for the rendering of descriptively richer insights into participants' lives. Case study methodology is compatible with an overall approach that is 'inductive and heuristic, and that involves thick descriptive data' (White, Drew & Hay 2009: 21).

One of the concerns with the descriptively-oriented research approach is 'a tendency to treat everything at the same level of detail', as though observations are made through a wide-angle lens (Wolcott 1994: 16). This flatness was characteristic of a traditional approach to ethnography which tended to idealise and typify the ethnographic subject rather than describe each action or event in its uniqueness. For Crapanzano, this universalising is exemplified in Geertz, 'who apparently attended many cockfights, [but] never describes a specific cockfight ... He constructs the Balinese cockfight and interprets his construction: "the Balinese cockfight."' (1986: 75). If traditional descriptive research approaches such as case study, ethnography and narrative inquiry can be characterised as typifying for the purposes of generalisability, of 'making individual social actors mere examples of larger social patterns' (Russell 1999: 139), then recent moves in these approaches are concerned with the particular

for the purposes of working towards the re-evaluation of agency and subjectivity within globalised and deterritorialised fields (Madison 2005; Marcus 1995, 2007; Rabinow et al. 2008).

In the present study, none of the three case studies was developed with the intention of being representative of a type in any generalisable sense. On the contrary, my focus was to some extent a critique of the 'punk' type. One way this was undertaken was to introduce elements of the participant's life story, as what was described in most cases would be consistent with the wider narratives of young people forming or joining bands in 1970s Australia. All eight participants had been teenagers in either suburban Sydney or regional centres of NSW and the ACT, with one having migrated to Australia as a boy. All but one of the participants were employed (most full-time) while involved in music performance and production. Such markers stand in contrast to narratives that situate the punk type as delinquent street urchin (Savage 1991; Thompson 2009) and punk music as lumpenproletariat 'dole queue rock'. This instance also suggests that, in late 1970s Sydney, structural disenfranchisement was not a prerequisite of punk subcultural identification and affiliation.

The use of case study, then, was a means to further emphasise heterogeneity among the cohort which worked towards unsettling the punk type, and, by extension, notions of an enclosed unity of the subcultural entity are also called into question consistent with recent studies in post-subcultural formations (Bennett 2011; Bennett & Kahn-Harris 2004; Muggleton & Weinzierl 2003; Nayak 2003: 13-33). White, Drew and Hay (2009: 22) note that cases are typically selected 'to explore the range of

variability within a population being studied'. Such cases present contrasting examples as well as outlier or negative cases which may be of interest.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH METHODS

The talk seems wandering, desultory, meandering.

Anais Nin

The methodological approach of the present study was a response to a series of interests, objects and problematics which required a methodical but flexible research design pathway. Most importantly, it had to be able to address the central research question of participant memory and past subcultural affiliation: how would members of the (dispersed) cohort now reflect on their experiences and understandings of a particular time in Sydney's cultural history.

The earliest motivations for the study were drawn from a combination of a kind of cultural salvage and archival preservation, that is, an otherwise lost story which ought to be told, and a material curiosity with various documents: archival film footage and other artefacts which were close to disappearing in both a material and a cultural-memory sense. How to provide cultural and historical context for those motivations led to a research design comprised of multiple strategies derived from the social sciences which could be adapted to suit visual-based inquiry (discussed at length below). 'The world,' Law observes, 'is not a structure, something we can map with our social science charts' (2004: 7). However, drawing on methodologies from the social sciences, while being cognisant of some of the shortfalls, allowed me to explore a complex and logistically challenging research problem within navigable boundaries and with some degree of orderly accounting.

Design overview

In a qualitative approach to research design the researcher sets out to interpret the world and its meanings as understood by those living in it. This interpretation is transformed into representation by way of methods and practices – a representation which, in turn, is influenced by the world as understood by the researcher (Denzin 2009; Hammersley & Atkinson 2007; Kalof, Dan & Dietz 2008). Acknowledging this multidirectional flow of influences and their effects throughout the research process is of primary concern for the researcher, as is a ‘willingness ... to challenge their own assumptions and subsequent interpretations according to the data’ (Bauer, Gaskell & Allum 2000: 16). Qualitative design approaches, of which there is no one model, provide frameworks for gathering and analysing data which require complex and detailed understandings of lifeworlds which are often fluid and messy, and made all the more so by the presence of the researcher within them (Creswell 2007; Kalof et al. 2008).

Furthermore, the qualitative research approach is no longer a unified one, largely due to debates which have taken place within the area of ethnography (Clifford & Marcus 1986; Dicks, Mason, Coffey & Atkinson 2005). These debates centred on foundational methodological assumptions relating to representation and legitimation, as well as broader epistemological contestations (Denzin 2009; Guba & Lincoln 1994; Seale 1999b). Seale (1999b) has argued that, while qualitative researchers must engage with philosophical and methodological debate, uncritical compliance with philosophical or methodological schema is a major threat to research quality – a position which largely underpins the argument for the autonomy of fieldwork in

ethnography. Law (2004) takes this line of argument further in suggesting that ‘methodological rule-following’, methods and their practices, all work toward not only describing but also producing a world which may be known only within the parameters of their inherent assumptions and constraints.

The generation of knowledge grounded in fieldwork, what indeed constitutes fieldwork, and the positionality of the researcher in the interpretation, construction and enactment of realities increasingly became key concerns during the course of this study. In the earlier stages of my research I was not aware of the extent of the producing forces of method, or that the role of researcher consists of a good deal more than simply observation and recording. Thus, only as the participant interviewing stage progressed did I become aware of the subtler, messier and unwieldy effects of the research process.

As I was interested in exploring perspectives held and articulated by participants in both written and visual mediums, the use of interviews became the first-order method for data collection as certain methods are, in the main, best suited to address certain research questions or topics. As Bloor and Wood note, whereas observation is best suited to behaviour, ‘matters of belief may be addressed best by interviews’ (2006: 171). To this extent my use of methodologies was neither conventional, in the sense that this research aims to present truth claims or, indeed, legitimacy by virtue of its grounding in established methodologies, nor experimental in the sense that it claims to test the boundaries of methodological legitimacy based on a disciplinary authority. The authority, that is, in ethnography, which became systematised in fieldwork via a syncretic relationship with anthropology, in what Clifford (1983: 121) described as a

‘fusion of general theory and empirical research, of cultural analysis with ethnographic description’. Ethnography’s subsequent dissociation from its disciplinary moorings has cast it more as an array of conceptual tools. It is not a primary objective to either claim or disclaim that authority as this study is grounded in fieldwork practice and advances the disciplinary independence of ethnography as a methodology – albeit in a field (visual) that remains close to the margins of ethnography (Mead 1995; Pink 2001).

Methodology

The present study draws from an assemblage of methodologies including ethnography, grounded theory, case study, and narrative inquiry. While these approaches to research derive from the social and human sciences (Guba & Lincoln 1994), their use in this study is selective, and adapted for realisation in a visual as well as written medium; the “writing” of ethnography, that which is conventionally considered the descriptive ethnographic data, is presented in both visual and written form. Drawing from aspects of multiple approaches allows for the development of a unique methodology best suited to addressing the focus of the research, the research problem or area of study (Crotty 1998). During the course of this study I found that taking a pluralistic approach to methodology was especially useful in working with visual-based research practices. For instance, a case study approach was useful in representing the relatively large number of participants who took part in music performance at the Grand Hotel.

Ethnography

The methodological framework informing and underpinning this study is ethnography, a qualitative approach to inquiry which developed within the fields of anthropology and sociology. The field-based, practical orientation of ethnography's research methods seemed at the outset well suited to the kind of inquiry I would be undertaking. At the same time, ethnography, as Van Maanen observes, 'remains open to a relatively artistic, improvised and situated model of social research where the lasting tenets of research design have yet to leave their mark' (2006: 18). There are also a number of developments in ethnographic research which appeared to me to be compatible and insightful reference points for the present study, some of which I discovered only during later stages of my research.

New configurations of the ethnographic model, referred to variously as hypertext or hypermedia research (Dicks et al. 2005), netnography (Kozinets 2002), and virtual (Hine 2000, 2005) or digital (Murthy 2008) ethnography, draw from established methodological strategies to investigate areas such as identity, performativity, and interaction in online environments. For the purposes of this study, online research was strategically circumscribed and heuristic. My engagement with online environments was mostly focused on participant recruitment and communication, and document collection and preliminary groundwork conducted using library and museum databases and a number of other digitised collections. As the immediate online social networks and groups to which I am connected are also those of the participants and dispersed cohort, interaction invariably involved the discussion and circulation of cultural knowledge. However, data gathering and analytic strategies were drawn mostly from offline, face-to-face methodologies. The digital dimension of the

research, particularly in its use of digital video technologies and its online dissemination, is further addressed in the study.

Grounded theory

Grounded theory is an ethnographic methodology derived from symbolic interactionism (Crotty 1998). The present study utilises a grounded theory approach of inquiry to the extent that data was collected with a view to not support any one proposition but rather as a means to develop and generate concepts which were further developed into a set of thematic categories forming the basis of the video work. A grounded theory approach was instrumental in guiding an explorative interview strategy based on iterative development between data analysis and fieldwork. This model is suited to a more ethically beneficent approach to the interview method as it aims to be open and explorative rather than interrogative (Charmaz 2006). (Further discussion concerning research ethics is presented in Appendix 1.) The grounded theory approach to inquiry is also more likely to generate a representation of the reality experienced by the research participants (Strauss & Corbin 1998) because the researcher's position is as an instrument of inquiry rather than an interrogator (Strauss 1987).

Case study

Lincoln and Guba (1985) have noted that, as with ethnographic and grounded theory methodologies, case study is concerned with the emic insofar as inquiry 'tends toward a reconstruction of the *respondents' constructions*' leading to contextual depth and thick description of a particular setting or phenomena (359). The application of case

study in the video component of my research, while secondary to the overall ethnographic approach, was very useful in providing a means of exploring and representing a specific area of participant production. Gerring (2007: 20) notes that the ‘implication of the term “case study” is that the unit ... under special focus is not perfectly representative of the population, or is at least questionable.’ In the context of music performance and production, at least 40 bands would have performed at the Grand Hotel in the period between September 1977 and late 1979, and to incorporate each respective individual representation was not only impracticable but would digress from the intended focus of this study, which was on the sociality of the subculture. Confining this aspect of punk subcultural production to three case studies allowed for thick description and a deeper contextualisation from the perspective of selected participants involved in music production.

Access and the participant group

The sample comprised a range of people, from a small number I knew personally to many I did not know until making contact for the purposes of this study. Of those I knew personally, I was in frequent contact with one, and infrequent contact with seven. Fifteen of the participants I did not know prior to this study. The remainder of the sample was made up of participants I had known to varying degrees as part of the cohort: one I had contact with very infrequently, and twelve not at all until making contact for the purposes of this study. Of the eight participants I knew personally contact was made relatively directly, while for the remainder contact was made in a manner consistent with similar ethnographic research into subcultural affiliation (Haenfler 2006; Leblanc 1999; Thornton 1996): some I had come across at venues, events and social gatherings, while others by way of the internet and social

networking sites such as Facebook. If initial contact was made via email a Participant Information Statement (Appendix 2) was provided to the prospective participant. If initial contact was made by telephone the points outlined in the PIS were discussed and a copy was sent to the prospective participant if interest in contributing to the project was indicated.

A number of participants actively assisted me beyond their agreeing to being interviewed. This type of participant is known in the literature by the terms key informant or sponsor. In ethnography these participants typically act as a guide or gatekeeper to the research field site, often negotiating access to the target group. In my case, no one participant at any time made any claim to having any greater degree of access or control than any other; these key participants were generous with their time and knowledge in providing contact information for a number of other potential participants.

The internet proved a valuable resource for finding potential participants as well as documents and materials. A number of potential participants maintained websites dedicated to the bands they had played in, and others had websites for their current businesses and other creative interests. A number of contacts were discovered via Facebook's 'suggest friend' functionality which contributed to the overall snowball sampling strategy of the research (Baltar & Brunet 2012; Bryman 2008). These contact suggestions came from both participants and non-participants. By sourcing contacts on the social networking site I was able to make further, formal approaches to potential participants. Facebook also became a very useful means of gathering documents such as photographs, audio and visual materials, fliers and posters, etc.

Recruiting participants via social networking sites also had its challenges. In one instance, a potential participant I had known personally in the late 1970s had agreed to be interviewed but declined soon after being ‘tagged’ in an image posted by another member of the cohort. It was later explained to me that being tagged, and the nostalgic way in which the image had been discussed in comments by other Facebook friends (connected users), had triggered certain memories which led to her decision. Another potential participant, also someone I had known personally in the late 1970s, had agreed to be interviewed but later declined after a phone conversation which, I understood in hindsight, had brought up sensitive memories of the time.

Instances such as these underline the need to be as mindful in virtual settings as in physical ones when approaching potential participants. Moreover, they indicate that being a member of the cohort – an ‘insider’ – does not automatically guarantee ready access to participants in the field. Berg (2001: 147) has noted that researchers ‘who already are members of the group to be studied ... possess certain strategic advantages’, such as gaining access more readily. In my case, having been part of the cohort was often a distinct advantage in approaching and communicating with potential participants. Logistically, however, that advantage went only so far in that, unlike the traditional field context where access to the group is localised and more immediate, the cohort was both spatially and temporally dispersed.

In commenting on access in his ethnography of the world of bicycle messengers, Fincham observes that the ‘likelihood of interviews being granted [is] increased if the informants feel as though they are talking to another “insider” with whom they have an affinity’ (2006: 191). The notion of researcher insider-status is well represented in

the literature, and access is a cornerstone of qualitative inquiry – ‘the means to ethnographic authority’ (Marcus 1997: 88). In the present study, however, my position was not so clear-cut due to, again, the cohort being dispersed; certainly not the mise-en-scene of conventional fieldwork. There were many instances where participants, particularly those who did not know me, were interested in discussing my place in the cohort, usually in relation to their own. These took the form of brief discussions, mostly prior to but also following the interview, about people, places, and events of the late 1970s: who between us recalls such and such a person, place or event and so on. I understood these instances to be mnemonic gestures which ultimately served to gauge my intentions, and the sincerity of my research, with a view to establishing trust.

At one interview session a participant recalled our having had conversations at various times in the late 1970s. I had not known the participant personally, and had no recollection of any conversation, which I explained as having a poor memory. Here people and places were discussed for the purposes mentioned above, but also to reconnect some of the linkages of the cohort of which we had both been a part. At other times the subject of these discussions would concern past instances where the participant and I might have had some kind of exchange. On one such occasion comments were made, but directed towards my partner and videocamera operator, Deb Shaw, and perhaps also to the participant’s friend who was preparing food in the kitchen where the interview was being conducted:

Chris Fay: And then I had to go to the toilet and I went and had a piss and I came back and – Des hated me for some reason, maybe because I came

in with Sean Phlegm [name changed] or something, and then he just came out and he went, yep – like he saw me coming out of the bathroom, and he went: did you throw up in there? I said, no, no, I just wanted to have a piss, and he said, no you didn't, no you threw up in there, didn't you? And then he ran, he sort of went – he stormed off to the laundry and he comes back with a bucket and sort of ammonia and all these cleaning products and ...

Des Devlin: I think you're making this up. [laughs]

CF: No, this really went on, this really went on. And he gets in there and he's scrubbing the toilet and he's cleaning, and I said that to one of the guys, I said what the hell's going on? I said what's that all about? And she said I don't know, it's the first time Des has ever cleaned the bathroom or the toilet, she said that's a first. And that's how...

DD: Are you sure that was me, not ...?

CF: No, it was you, mate – no, no it was you.

This exchange conveys a number of aspects of the relationship between participant and researcher. The recollection of a past animosity is expressed, quite vivid after 35 years, but done so in a jovial manner. To be teased, Geertz wrote, is to be accepted. Forgiven but not forgotten perhaps – a reminder of the people we once were but, more importantly, of the people we are no longer. Also of note in this exchange is the attitude held towards the households where punks lived or dropped into unannounced

and stayed: while typically unacceptable to close the door to another punk, indirect communication, melodramatic in this case, was used to express undesirability. Two weeks after interviewing this participant I attended a party for his 50th birthday. In my fieldnotes of the following day I wrote that he had, at one point in the evening, ‘introduced me to some of his friends as another original punk, like himself.’ This I understood to be a confirmation of my insider status in the dispersed cohort.

On another occasion, a number of members of the cohort came together one evening in mid 2011 at a Sydney pub. Many were from a subgroup I had very little personal involvement with in the late 1970s. Much of the discussion I had among this group consisted of reflecting on our mutual involvement in the cohort, as well as Sydney punk subculture of the 1980s, of which I had little knowledge. The night was organised in celebration of the visit of Cathi SoldierWolf, a member of the group who had been living in the US for many years. In my fieldnotes from the following day I noted that Cathi had,

asked me where I fitted in, as we didn't hang out together. I described myself as a young – I think I said – quiet punk who, like her, used to go see bands. She talked about the 'Rez' [reservation] and bringing up her two kids in a pretty violent environment. She compared it with aboriginal communities in this country, same social problems etc. This was after talking about the possibility of relocating the family here. I invited her up to stay in the mountains, said I'd contact her through Facebook. She gave me a card, [her husband's card]. Didn't talk about interview or even project, I don't think. ... We talked about (briefly) things we got up to as

punks – in reference really. Started talking about anger then someone pulled her away.

This particular social gathering has stayed with me as it marked the beginning of a kind of discord I would feel about my status as an insider researcher. I aimed to be always upfront in talking about my research, and it was almost always spoken of positively by participants and others of the cohort. Nonetheless, from time to time I would become aware of a certain feeling of friction while in social settings, which were to increasingly become at the same time fieldwork settings. I was also sensitive to the idea that that my interaction on Facebook might be taken as strategic, even though much of my social networking activity concerned establishing connections and communicating with potential participants, and occasionally sourcing audio and visual materials. Again, I would consider this as an occasionally challenging side effect of having research participants who are also part of my cohort.

The notion of the naïve researcher has long been a trope within ethnography, often associated with what is known variously as the ‘arrival scene’, ‘tale of entry’, ‘scene of encounter’, or ‘confessional’ (Pratt 1986; Marcus 2007; Seale 1999a; Clifford 1983). These are typically in the form of a chronicle of first contact in the field wherein the ethnographer describes at length the nuances and minutiae of infiltration and exchange, commonly through a series of blunders (Seale 1999a). In his analysis of Geertz’s (1973) essay ‘Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight’, Crapanzano observes that the anthropologist ‘is cast stereotypically as a *naïf*, an awkward simpleton, not at all sure of his identity ... who is caught in a betwixt and between world’ (1986: 69). Geertz, in other words, casts himself as the trusting innocent. It is a

rhetorical device at once authorial and authoritative. The twilight land of the other is the surface upon which the ethnographer, with calculated wonderment, may begin to inscribe his passage to insider, while simultaneously marking his presence, his 'being there', the signature of his ethnographic authority, as outsider. Access came to Geertz by happy accident. After ten days of invisibility amongst Balinese villagers he attends a cockfight which is suddenly raided by police. In a blind moment, not thinking to use his privilege with the authorities, he flees the scene along with the locals. The following day his novitiate has ended and the anthropologist's formerly transparent form is now fully visible. He is 'quite literally "in"' (Geertz 1973: 416). This fast track to rapport, written up as serendipity, suggests both the arbitrary nature of access and the sleuthing aspects of gaining entry. Crapanzano describes it as a 'whodunit, something out of Mickey Spillane' (1986: 69). Fine prefers to use the metaphor of 'espionage' to describe the ways of the ethnographer (1993: 276).

Population, sampling frame and the sample

The population was defined as those people who had an affiliation with the punk subculture of the Grand Hotel during the period from September 1977 to mid to late 1979 when it operated as a venue for punk and underground music. The population was estimated by one participant as being in the order of 200 people, although this figure could equally be taken as a rough measure of the total number of people who had frequented the venue over the two-year period. The population is referred to throughout this study as the 'cohort'.

The sampling frame, 'the set of cases from which the sample will be chosen' (Kalof et al. 2008: 42), was in the present study informed by three conceptual strategies. The

first was based on connection to the site within a specific period of time, as outlined above: potential participants had to have had first-hand experience by affiliation with the subculture. The second strategy was to make no distinction between those in the cohort who were band members and those who were not. Representatives of punk subculture have typically been considered to be those involved in music production and performance. As a major aim of this study is to give an account of the sociality of past subcultural affiliation, it was important from the outset to seek to include as wide a representation as reasonably possible within the limits of the research design. The third conceptual strategy would rely very much on purposive sampling (Bryman 2008). There were a number of areas in the study which required expert knowledge: two participants were selected for their knowledge of the founding of the venue, and a number of participants were interviewed in order to gain insights into filming or photographing the punk subculture of the Grand Hotel and other relevant aspects of the Sydney punk scene, as well as other aspects of image and film production during the late 1970s. Involvement in music performance and production, a major focus for many of the participants, became a core thematic category, which was abstracted to three case studies (as discussed in Chapter 3).

Bruner (1986b) argued that the ethnographer carries a preconceived story into the field and, once there, chooses 'those informants whose narratives are most compatible with our own' (151). If so, the challenge for the researcher must be to recognise our own preconceptions and to be judicious in selecting participants in order to break down that story. Becker (1963/1997) notes that, in population sampling, potential participants are too often selected based on conventional categories of what he terms 'the hierarchy of credibility'. For example, in organisational and institutional

populations, samples are drawn typically from those in knowledge-power positions, who present as more convincing and more articulate than those in subordinate positions. For the purposes of this study, I sought to recruit participants from outside the hierarchy of credibility, which, in the general mediation of punk subculture, is associated with cultural capital (examples of which typically include members of 'known' bands, journalists, and other commentators).

A sample of between 30 to 35 persons was anticipated to be reflective of the population, consistent with purposive non-probability sampling in qualitative research. The sample is referred to throughout this study as the 'participants'. Thirty-six participants agreed to take part in the study, their ages ranging from late 40s to late 50s. Six participants were interviewed within three pair groups, and another four participants were interviewed in a group of four. One of the members of the latter group was also interviewed individually. The sample was limited to people who were living in Australia, with the exception of one participant who was visiting Australia from the United States. This was a decision made based on practicalities, resources and the timeframe of the study. Interviews were conducted in inner-city and greater metropolitan Sydney, Illawarra, Blue Mountains, the regional NSW town of Young, the village of Elands, as well as regional Queensland towns. The majority of interviews were conducted in the participant's home or the home of a friend in cases where they were visiting from interstate or overseas; two interviews were done in rehearsal spaces, and another at a disused industrial site.

While discussion with participants did cover class and ethnicity, I did not actively seek to construct a sample based on conventional structural or 'face-sheet' categories:

I did not recruit actively with class or ethnic representativeness in mind. I did however actively seek to strike a balance between male and female participants.

Data collection

This study employed aspects of a number of established qualitative social research methods associated with ethnographic inquiry and fieldwork. Conversation, occasional participant observation, and document analysis were used to support the primary means of collection, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. Since the main focus of the research was concerned with on-camera interviews, I had sought to limit data collection to only that which I expected would provide a measure of data proportionate to the sample population within the timeframe of the fieldwork.

However, although a multi-method approach had from the outset been built into the research design, I became concerned about possible negative effects resulting from interview data outweighing those of other methods, particularly observation. This concern was allayed as I found that, as the study progressed, the triangulation strategies available in the research design allowed for meaningful validation of the interview data. Observation at the interview setting, at events and other social gatherings, follow-up conversations, and ongoing document research all, where relevant, fed back into and informed subsequent interviews.

Ortner (1993) raises similar concerns during the early stages of her major ethnographic undertaking *New Jersey Dreaming* (2003) regarding the absence of observational method: one of the advantages of observation in relation to research participants is that it provides ‘access to their lives outside of what they say to the ethnographer’ in the interview setting (1993: 417). This early unease is, however, for

the most part absent from her published research (2003) where numerous and diverse interview sites provide the loci for observation, and the situating of the interviews within a broader cultural and historical context.

In the present study, I found it increasingly necessary to move away from the constraints of conventional formulations of method in qualitative inquiry, particularly with regard to what constitutes the ‘field’ in ethnographic practice. This move was driven by, among other things, questions within visual ethnography of the tension between video and method. My view of the use of video in ethnography was, at the outset, based almost wholly on the idea that video was the *means* to the interview’s *mode* of production. Video was how the interview data would, at one end, be recorded, and how the research would, at the other, be disseminated. The camera was not so much a method in itself but rather a recording instrument, albeit with real-world interventional effects. However, that view shifted almost immediately upon entering the field. The camera had both observational-recording and producing effects, becoming a complex presence within the dynamics of the interview environment, and if it were to provide a meaningful ethnographic record, it would, as Barbash and Taylor (1997: 60) observe, need ‘to get close and be involved, for that is how we experience life itself’, for staying ‘close to things’ produces a thickness in inquiry (Rabinow 2008: 81). Thus, in moving away from notions of the neutral observer, to move ‘closer’, was to accept that in our methods we are also *producing* the realities of our research (Law 2004). These producing effects became all the more evident in the later stages of video editing and production which involved the explicit crafting and weaving of narrative and visual elements.

Participant interviews

Interviews were conducted with 36 participants at either their home or a place of their choosing. Interviews were typically between 60 and 90 minutes in length, with a small number up to 120 minutes duration. Participants were given the opportunity to decide how their interview was to be recorded: audio and video, audio only, or by notepad. All but one participant chose to be recorded on videocamera; one was by audio only. The interviews were recorded on a Sony PD-170 digital camera mounted on a tripod. Sound was recorded using a Sony UWP-C1 wireless lapel microphone, and an ECM-999PR stereo shotgun condenser microphone where required. A notepad and pen were also used occasionally during some interviews.

I would begin each interview with a preamble, which would reiterate important aspects of the Participant Information Sheet (PIS) in order to contextualise the interview. The interview schema, as outlined in the PIS, involved the discussion of topic areas within the following three-part structure:

- Background and discovery. Participants were invited to discuss some aspect of their background, and what they were doing prior and subsequent to contact with punk subculture;
- Affiliation and experience. Discussion was directed to the nature of the participant's involvement and identification with punk subculture, their individual experiences and their relation to the group;
- Transition and legacy. Participants were asked to discuss their moving on from their involvement in the subculture, its legacy, and any remaining ties they might have to the cohort.

The rationale for the three-part schema was guided by my interest in how participants reflected not only on their experience in punk subculture but also of perceptions of self and lifeworld prior to and following their involvement. Discussion on these areas sought to address, firstly, the overall research aim of gaining insight into punk subcultural affiliation within a particular localised milieu and, secondly, on the significance that experience might have for participants in the present. An interview guide was used in the earlier stages of the fieldwork, and in some cases developed specifically for the participant based on my knowledge of their involvement in the cohort. Questions were, where appropriate, mostly of an open-ended form and targeted, consistent with exploratory inquiry. While I was interested in discovering participant experience, definitions of terms, meaning ascribed to various aesthetic symbols, practices, and artefacts related to punk subculture, I was concerned also with gathering information of a chronological nature such as a participant's first exposure to and contact with punk, notable events, descriptions of venue, locale and other sites, and, where relevant, period spent in London, return to Australia, and so on. These two streams equate roughly to emic and etic approaches to the data, best illustrated by their use in the visual work: participants' perspectives and materials expressed through a framework developed, firstly, from the data, then further in the data analysis and video editing phases following the fieldwork.

Prior to the formal interview the participant and I (and often the camera person, Deb Shaw, as well as others who might happen to be present at the interview setting) would often engage in casual conversation while the recording equipment was being set up. During these moments – which also occurred in post-interview conversation –

participants would on occasion begin discussion on matters I hoped would be covered on-camera. As these often insightful moments were not recorded I would later include relevant information in my fieldnotes.

The interview method

The qualitative interview, as Farr has noted, is ‘essentially a technique or method for establishing or discovering that there are perspectives or viewpoints on events other than those of the person initiating the interview’ (cited in Gaskell 2000: 38). That interviews are essentially concerned with the views of others is, I found, one thing to comprehend but quite another to initiate easily or skilfully into fieldwork practice. One of the challenges in having had first-hand knowledge of my research subject was learning to listen, to practise restraint, and to bracket my own views during interviews. There was a point during my fieldwork where I began to get a sense of how I might start to address this challenge, as reflected in this passage from my fieldnotes following a participant interview session.

Overall though, I was happy with this interview for the reasons already stated. That is, I think it represents a good development in my method which is to not intervene too much and let the conversation unfold as the interviewee sees fit. This is a subtle shift, I think, and only perceptible after trial and error. For me it requires discipline and restraint. This was the first interview where I actually, on the morning of the interview, drilled into my head the idea that this interview is about the interviewee and not either me or any ideal of what the story should be. It should be other-regarding rather than self-regarding, as they say in ethical theory. I

also attempted to drill into my head the need to actually listen, be as fully present as possible, which sounds obvious but is not as easily achieved as one might think. This was aided by my not using an interview guide and formulating questions on the fly from the remarks being made by [the participant] during the interview.

My fieldnotes here also marked a turn towards a less structured approach to interviewing. From the outset, I endeavoured to be consistent in following a semi-structured approach which I assumed would increase the reliability of the study. I would prepare topic areas for discussion prior to interviews, making only relatively minor adjustments for each participant. And although I aimed to ask mostly open-ended questions I would still occasionally frame questions which would logically result in only yes-no responses. I would also focus on specific topics which, in some cases, would be quite targeted and directed. This approach, I soon discovered, risked gathering data which served to confirm my own preconceptions about the research. Thus the move to a less structured approach (Berg 2001; Bryman 2001, 2008; Creswell 2007). I continued with the three-part schema though no longer referred to an interview guide. However, I would continue to ask targeted questions where relevant. If, for example, I knew a participant had gone to London in the late 1970s, or had taken photographs or film footage at the time, I would seek to guide discussion towards those areas. I came to find that well-placed targeted questioning within overall participant-directed discussion was integral to my interview approach as it provided the vehicle by which interview data could, where relevant, be fed back into successive interviews.

For Rubin and Rubin, the qualitative interview may be characterised by ‘how intensely the researcher listens to pick up on key words, phrases, and ideas’ (cited in Berg 2001: 84). To listen closely and intensely is neither to risk negating the researcher’s own position during the interview, nor to become ‘a mere mouthpiece’ for the participant (Bryman 2008: 554). Rather, it is to become more open and emotionally engaged in a negotiated encounter (Oakley 2003). Intensive qualitative interviewing is situated in contradistinction to structured survey-style approaches. It crosses unstructured and semi-structured approaches and ‘may range from a loosely guided exploration of topics to semi-structured focused questions’ (Charmaz 2006: 26). My use of intensive qualitative interviewing was consistent with a grounded theory approach to inquiry insofar as it was ‘shaped yet emergent’. Listening for key words and ideas of the participant allowed me, where appropriate, to develop ‘questions on the fly from the remarks being made’ (fieldnotes). Following a broad iterative model, viewing recordings and making initial assessments of interview data progressively informed successive interviews. However, unlike in classic grounded theory, some data would not be coded until towards the completion of the interview phase, as it was transcribed during the early stages of data analysis. Another point of difference was that I proceeded to keep topic areas open rather than narrow the scope of topic areas as the interview phase progressed.

Further rationale for taking a less structured approach is highlighted in my fieldnotes following an interview session with another participant:

I've now come to accept or understand that the study has its own “logic” or motivity. I've all but stopped trying to direct the conversations, except

to at times pull it back to punk or related topic – when it strays a bit too far.

There are two important things to remember. One is to follow the participant's line or thread, which means listening and focussing. This allows people to feel better, more relaxed, about what they are saying, that what they are talking about is valuable, not “wrong” for example, as some people have expressed. It validates their view. This is not the case when participants are hit with questions one after the other. I think this is a much more honest method of interviewing. ... The other important thing to remember? ... it's good to lose control in the interview. That is, not to rigidly adhere to my idea of how it should go or in what order it should proceed. Don't be afraid to let the conversation be mostly about, say, before punk. Equally, after punk. Trust the participant. ...

You may have some good ideas about the topics going into the study, some new ideas or approaches, but so much will be wasted if you cannot get beyond your own ideas and start listening and enabling others to feel comfortable with their discussion and their views. This clearly introduces other knowledge and ideas into the study.

To ‘lose control’ and to ‘follow the participant's line’ became part of my interview practice, and moving to a less structured interview approach opened the way for building a better researcher-participant relationship. It was my experience that respecting the direction the participant might wish to take in the interview engendered

trust. I was aware that to want to encourage the participant to take control would be to move against a conventional ethnography interview model in which the researcher ‘gradually takes more control of the talking’ and directs the discussion into targeted channels (Spradley 2001: 335). It was here that I found my approach consistent with aspects of phenomenological interviewing, where the researcher takes on a learner position and the participant that of expert: ‘The interview is a conversation with the participant, taking the lead in describing the particular experiences in whatever way he or she chooses’ (deMarrais 2004: 57). I also found the phenomenological notion of bracketing useful in helping me to focus during interviews.

My inexperience in qualitative interviewing in the field, coupled with a certain level of anxiety, made for a difficult first few interviews. If I appeared to participants as somewhat wide-eyed, it was certainly not by design. Early in the study, I would picture myself as a kind of Detective Columbo character, stumbling through interviews and absentmindedly repeating questions which were too often long-winded and straying. And, while not intentional, this lack of technique did have its advantages. Presenting naïvely may have been reassuring for some participants, and at times may have helped to break the ice at interview settings. It may in some instances have served to allay concerns in relation to preconceptions of inequality between me and the participant (MacFarlane 2009). Stumbling through a question may have had a disarming effect and allowed for greater participant proactivity and expression.

Repeating a question might often elicit further information from the participant: responses might be a good deal longer and less scripted than previous ones, and richer and thicker in description. Naivety, it seemed, could produce results.

A major difficulty with this approach, however, is the extent to which the participant feels he or she is being listened to. Repeating a question may just as easily elicit frustration from the participant who feels their responses have gone unheard or ignored. A lengthy and rambling question, perhaps replete with personal anecdotes, may be interpreted as conceited, and disrespectful. A lack of concision in a question may be met with resentment, as time wasted, and complex or double-barrelled questions may confuse the participant, resulting in alienation, withdrawal and silence. Most importantly, if such an approach were to be taken intentionally, that is, if to present naïvely were to be deployed consciously as a kind of artful move, justified by results, then it would raise serious ethical concerns regarding deception. It was important in my interview practice, then, to become more conscious of how I might better frame and contextualise questions. (Further discussion of research ethics is presented in Appendix 1.)

Repeating questions to elicit further information on a topic is a recognised part of the ethnographer's toolkit, as are many other techniques which, when managed skilfully, are less likely be misinterpreted by participants. Spradley (2001) highlights the various devices used by the researcher by comparing types of speech occurring in the ethnographic interview context with those in general social conversation. Repetition is strategic in the ethnographic interview but to be avoided in general conversation as it implies not listening and may be interpreted as disrespectful. Restating and incorporating the participant's responses *in their own words* into successive questions is a key technique for the ethnographer: it engenders trust by validating the participant's own use of words; it serves a mnemonic function in jogging memory; and it helps to expand description.

Bracketing

Once fieldwork was underway, I grew concerned about the effects of my influence in interviews. My motivation for bracketing was based on a need to manage my own preconceptions about the research in order to focus more closely and intensely during interviews. Gearing (2004) argues that researchers need to describe rather than simply acknowledge their bracketing process. In the present study, bracketing, in the rudimentary sense in which I have employed it, might best be described as a focusing technique which I worked at developing over the course of the interviewing phase of my research.

The concept of bracketing in phenomenology pertains to a process of reduction,

in which a researcher suspends or holds in abeyance his or her presuppositions, biases, assumptions, theories, or previous experiences to see and describe the phenomenon. Bracketing, as in a mathematical equation, suspends certain components by placing them outside the brackets, which then facilitates a focusing in on the phenomenon within the brackets (Gearing 2004: 1430–31).

Bracketing has its origins in the philosophical phenomenology of Husserl, and his concept of the ‘epoché’, or what has come to be known as Ideal bracketing, which ‘claims to remove distortion of perception, by enabling a refraining from judgment’ (Tan, Wilson, & Olver 2009: 3). Zahavi situates the Husserlian model within the inductive paradigm: researchers should ‘not let preconceived theories form our

experience, but let our experience determine our theories' (2003: 45). The phenomenological quest in the epoché consists in 'reaching the ultimate experiential and cognitive perspective thinkable' (Husserl 1967/1998: 15), where the object is observed 'from a state of reflection' (Koestenbaum 1998: xx).

Gubrium and Holstein (1997) introduced analytic bracketing, an application derived from Husserlian phenomenology, into the qualitative research domains of ethnography and grounded theory. Whereas Ideal bracketing was focused on an attempt to actively see past the object's essences in order to understand its universals, the analytic bracketing of qualitative research was a move towards understanding 'the essences of the experience ... without claiming universal insights into the phenomenon' (Gearing 2004: 1433). Denzin (1998) took issue with some of Gubrium and Holstein's assumptions in the analytic bracketing model, most notably with the notion that a world of things or phenomena 'exists prior to its mediation by signs and signs of signs' (408). A thing, Denzin argues, 'is only understood through its representations' (1998: 405-406); there can be no analytic space outside of representation: 'One cannot be simultaneously inside and outside a representational field' (1998: 409). The extent to which the applicability of bracketing within a qualitative setting can be meaningfully achieved remains a matter of debate. Its practice requires a certain training of perception, which 'calls for a number of methodological preparations' (Zahavi 2003: 45). For Moustakas, it is to experience the object 'freshly, as if for the first time' (cited in Creswell 2007: 60), a transcendent state seldom attained. Giorgi (2008) makes a pessimistic assessment of recent applications of the phenomenological method in the social sciences, specifically where it is adopted without modifications which reflect the researcher's own

‘disciplinary attitude’, suggesting that results might be improved by more rigorous adherence to procedure and a requisite foundation in phenomenological philosophy. According to Gearing, in analytic bracketing the researcher perseveres despite ‘the improbability of suspending internal suppositions, such as their personal knowledge, assumptions, beliefs, values, and viewpoints’ (2004: 1443). The researcher perseveres presumably because these suppositions and assumptions may be ‘recognized as part of reality and can become incorporated in the investigation’ (2004: 1448). Where this recognition and incorporation begins in analytic bracketing is where the researcher becomes ‘consciously self-aware of their influence on the phenomenon under investigation’ (2004: 1448-49). To acknowledge rather than to negate one’s presence, and to consider, rather than put out of consideration or suspend, personal suppositions as part of the research brings the practice of bracketing closer to the reflexive impulse of qualitative inquiry. Creswell suggests that bracketing might be better understood and implemented as a kind of negotiation of personal experience – as a case of the researcher deciding on ‘how and in what way his or her personal understandings will be introduced into the study’ (2007: 62).

The words and ideas of the participant-interviewee were the phenomena I sought to explore, and the form of bracketing I endeavoured to practise was by no means sophisticated. As applied within the interview setting bracketing was a useful heuristic which helped me to guide my focus to the participant and to be mindful of my own influence. I found that, for my purposes, to approach it in reverse was in many ways more effective: to practise listening was in effect to practise bracketing, or at least conducive to it.

Participant expectation

I emphasised a number of times that this was his story and he had control over what would be talked about. There was no right or wrong thing to say, or direction to go in. I did not want him to feel as though he had to say the right thing, or that he needed to come up with the “goods”.

(fieldnotes)

The importance of being mindful of my influence in the interview setting was highlighted by a small number of participants who were concerned with whether some of their responses were ‘right’. Instances such as these may result from participants taking cues from the researcher (deMarrais 2004), both verbal and non-verbal, and the nature of the questions asked (Cousin 2010). I found that moving to a less structured interview format helped to address this concern, and resulted in less scripted and fewer yes-no responses. Another helpful measure was to go over the Participant Information Sheet prior to and occasionally during the interview session in order to emphasise the research rather than the documentary aspects of the project.

After more than three decades of punk subculture being represented in various media, many of the participants were very well versed in what might be called the dominant punk narrative, particularly in documentary film. *The Filth and the Fury* (Temple 2000), *End of the Century: The Story of The Ramones* (Field 2003), *Punk Attitude* (Letts 2005), and *Joe Strummer: The Future Is Unwritten* (Temple 2007) were all often raised in conversation, as was the book *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History Of Punk* (McNeil & McCain 1996). One effect of this dominant narrative was the high probability of participants having preconceived ideas about how to present in

the context of a 'documentary about punk', as evidenced by the notion of delivering 'right' answers, or responses of a type I may have wanted to hear, and extending to types of performance. I thought of these as verbal and visual rhetorics, precoded in tropes and mediated conventions. To this extent, the presence of the ethnographer is, as Marcus notes, *anticipated* 'prior to his or her arrival on the scene' (2007: 1142).

Silence

There were also occasional blanks and silences, as well as tangents.

(fieldnotes)

This line from my fieldnotes refers to the challenges associated with extended moments of silence which occurred during interviews. Silence may sometimes be attributed to the participant's lapse in memory on a topic. There may also simply be no memory or only fragments of memory. Silence may result from a difficulty with cognitive recall, to a deliberation on privacy, whether something ought to be disclosed to the researcher, to intentional avoidance or holding back sensitive, painful or embarrassing memories. Selective or distorted memory may occur during interviews when 'participants are asked to recall situations that happened in the past or are painful and therefore are difficult to remember and accurately recall' (Kalof et al 2008: 206). Participants may also be shy, taciturn, tired, or just disinterested. I found that, given the range of possibilities, to speculate on the cause of participant silence during interviews was counterproductive, that is, rather than to concentrate on keeping the conversation moving.

If silence occurred through the interview I would talk about my own experiences in whichever topic area was being discussed in order to keep the conversation flowing. I would do this to try to trigger the participant's own memories and spark discussion. In one interview, for instance, discussion was very slow to start. The participant was on holidays with her family and had just returned from a long run. The family was staying near the beach at Noosa in Queensland. She had been living on an Arapaho reservation in Wyoming with her husband and two children for the past 17 years and was very much enjoying just relaxing, and her life back in the 1970s, I imagined, must have seemed very remote to her now. On this occasion I began by simply talking about my own experience until the participant became more comfortable in what is, for some people, an unnatural setting. In this instance the participant had anticipated difficulty with recalling events of over three decades previous. However, the flow of discussion improved as the interview progressed. In another instance, visual prompting or photo elicitation worked well for a participant who had expressed a lot of difficulty with recall. She was one of a number of participants who had photographed people and events of the 1970s punk scene. After some period of fairly staggered discussion I found that turning the focus of the conversation to her photo albums and prints very much improved its flow.

Chapter 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND VIDEO PRODUCTION

Data are materials to think with.

Hammersley and Atkinson

The thematic categories of the visual component of this study were developed *through* the analysis process. The approach to analysis was derived from strategies within grounded theory and narrative inquiry. These strategies were integrated and applied in Transana, an open-source computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program, where much of the data coding and analysis was performed. Participant validation here performed a dual purpose in the overall research design of ethical and analytical consolidation.

Approaches to analysis and analytic purpose

The process of data analysis in the present study draws from aspects of grounded theory and narrative approaches to analysis in order to develop a coherent rendering of the social life of the cohort. The accounts of participants form the basis of a visual ethnography which is supported and enhanced by documentary data produced from within the cohort itself. While software was used in coding interview data, interpretive selections based on a narrative approach to analysis also informed the process. The process involved the generation of approximately 1,000 keywords and a total of 56 keyword groups or categories, from which nine core thematic categories were developed. Thematic categories were developed by assigning one or more

keywords to units of transcribed interview data which ranged in size from words and partial sentences to multiple passages. These latter, larger units of data provide for a less fragmented narrative flow (Riessman 2008; Berg 2001).

Besides the recording of some live music events and footage for establishing shots the majority of video data generated was participant interviews. Given the quantity and diversity of the data corpus (all collected media), I was inclined to include only interview transcriptions in the data set in order to avoid introducing a further level of complexity to the overall study. Dicks et al. (2005) argue that coding forms of video data other than those of the interview form becomes redundant, and data such as non-verbal footage of participants in a 'natural' setting requires 'a more flexible and interpretative approach' to analysis rather than reducing visual data to categories (155). Thus, while interview data about documentary materials were coded, the materials themselves – archival footage, audio and visual documents, and non-interview video data – were not included in the coding process.

Grounded and narrative strategies were good methods for developing a visual-ethnographic outcome which combined field and documentary data. A grounded approach to analysis was chosen for four main reasons. It is open and creative in its coding strategies. Codes are developed from the ground up rather than from a preconceived schema (cf. Lofland & Lofland 1995). It allows for an adaptive and flexible approach to research design which is sensitive to the influence of experiential data. And fourth, it has a strong focus on maintaining a close relationship to the substance of the data which is conducive to emic representational outcomes: 'Theory derived from data is more likely to resemble the "reality" than is theory derived by

putting together a series of concepts based on experience or solely through speculation' (Strauss & Corbin 1998: 12). As with narrative analysis, there are no precise or correct procedures for grounded theory analysis, which is more a 'set of general principles and heuristic devices rather than formulaic rules' (Chamaz 2006: 3). The fact that its founders advanced divergent models which were to remain unreconciled (Charmaz 2008; Morse 2009) may have only contributed to grounded theory's versatility. Certainly I found this to be the case when deployed within a visual-ethnographic environment; I did not feel obliged to follow a set formula, albeit there being few signposts to follow. The rationale for drawing on a narrative approach to analysis was based on a number of considerations including: the end result would be a storied audiovisual representation; its interpretive and creative strategies in developing thematic clusters; and its focus on maintaining narrative coherence and connection to the subject.

At the outset I was uncertain whether the flexibility for which grounded theory has become known would extend beyond its own internal processes to incorporate and integrate with other analytic approaches. I had difficulty locating not only procedural explanations but explicit references to qualitative mixed analytic approaches (as distinct from multimethod) within a visual-ethnographic environment. I came to the view that, in its stricter applications, grounded theory is flexible in relation to its internal strategies but requires a commitment to the procedural operations of its own class as these 'are essential to the development of densely woven and tightly integrated theory' (Strauss 1987: 25). Like grounded theory, narrative analysis is also concerned with an adherence to internal procedures. Riessman (2003: 372) states that 'different approaches can be combined; they are not mutually exclusive, and, as with

all typologies, boundaries are fuzzy'. However, these different approaches, again suggesting flexibility, refer to narrative rather than broader analytic models. On that account, and given that I was making no claim to strict adherence to the procedural delineations of either grounded or narrative approaches to analysis, their combined use in the present study was initiated by taking a more interpretive and experimental approach to analysis. After all, as 'each qualitative study is unique, the analytical approach used will be unique' (Patton 2002: 433).

As the study progressed I found support for an integrated analytic approach within a number of fields, although again not within visual ethnography. Floersch, Longhofer, Kranke, and Townsend employ within a social work environment what they describe as a hybrid approach to analysis in which 'thematic, grounded theory and narrative techniques are integrated and applied to the same dataset to produce a multidimensional view' (2010: 407). Although the authors class thematic and narrative approaches as distinct, the present study views thematic analysis as a subset of narrative analysis (Bryman 2008; Riessman 2003, 2008). Bazeley makes the observation that, whereas the model of 'multiple methods has a long history in evaluation and sociological research ... *mixing methods*, particularly, integration during data analysis, has a lesser history' (2012: 815). In this 'dual-analytic' approach, 'data might be analyzed in one form, and then manipulated into a different form to allow an alternative approach', which might also involve either "qualitizing" numeric data [or] "quantitizing" qualitative coding' (Bazeley: 821). This approach, however, is performed sequentially, one analytical approach following another, which was not the comparative-iterative low-level integration I was seeking. Mixed-method

or integrated data analysis thus remains ‘inherently messy and still largely experimental’ (Bazeley: 825).

The integrated approach undertaken in this study involved combining two analytic streams drawn from grounded theory and narrative inquiry respectively. Whereas the grounded theory approach to analysis follows a category-oriented model of reduction, the thematic narrative approach seeks to retain the storied forms expressed in the data. That these two approaches have distinct objectives does not, however, preclude either a common analytic aim or a shared coding practice. Both approaches, regardless of their respective sensibilities, follow identical coding procedures of interpreting and identifying concepts expressed in the data, and creating linkages by keyword association. Within the coding environment a single data unit may be associated with one or more keywords, and it is on this basis that two distinct modes of analysis may be performed *concurrently*. In the present study, it was not uncommon for a unit of data associated with a single keyword when coded in a narrative mode to be simultaneously associated with multiple keywords when coded in a grounded theory mode. To that extent, the keyword-coding process may be viewed as the nexus wherein two streams governed by distinct modal sensibilities are integrated. Again, the narrative mode of analysis approaches a video segment as a unit of data which is semantically or visually coherent or intact. The grounded mode of analysis, on the other hand, approaches that same unit of data as comprised of one or more concepts which may be associated with one or more keyword descriptors.

From interview transcription and coding to thematic construction, data analysis is an interpretive process (Charmaz 2006; Mishler 2003; Wolcott 1994). Through a series

of interpretive acts the researcher transforms data into a rendering which seeks to describe the social world of the research participant. These interpretive acts implicate the researcher as much as the participant in the construction of narrative (Riessman 2008) in addition to highlighting an important aspect of the analysis process described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) as the 'interplay' between data and researcher. Interplay pertains to the relation between the 'data themselves and the researcher's interpretation of meaning' (294). In this model of grounded theory the researcher's interpretation of the data is continuously checked against incoming data. Ongoing comparison and the researcher's closeness to the data are key to situating grounded theory within a broader move away from a validity tied to notions of epistemological objectivity (Adler & Adler 1987; Seale 1999b). Interplay, to that extent, is arguably a continuation of Glaser and Strauss's notion of researcher 'insight', which can derive 'directly from theory ... or occur without theory', and may be incorporated into 'systematic comparative analysis' (1967/2006: 251). An insight is an interpretation which should not be suppressed or ignored in favour of theory, but rather continuously used to compare and validate data. Insights may derive also from the researcher's 'own personal experiences prior to or outside' their research (Glaser & Strauss: 252). Strauss would later refer to data 'drawn from the researcher's personal, research, and literature-reading experiences' as 'experiential' data (1987: 20). The conditions under which data is interpreted, then, becomes a necessary focus within the analysis process, and interplay – researcher insight and its relation to data – strongly suggests a place for reflexivity in the account of the analysis procedures of research. 'However analysis is done,' Patton notes, researchers 'have an obligation to monitor and report their own procedures and processes as fully and truthfully as possible' (2002: 434).

Coding in Transana

Coding of the data was done using Transana, a software application developed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Education Research. Because video was both a means of recording interviews and the major part of the research dissemination, I required a method of data analysis which could manage audiovisual media. Transana enables video media and transcripts to be linked and synchronised by time-code markers. The program's nomenclature is film oriented; terms such as 'clip', 'episode', 'series' and so on are used to describe data types. So in the coding environment (Figure 1), a segment of video data is called a clip, which is at the same time a unit of data defined within the linked transcript (in-text), with time-coded in and out points. Transana allows a clip to be associated with one or more 'keywords', which are essentially labels by which data are developed into conceptually meaningful clusters. The keyword terms used in the present study were a combination of my own and those derived from the participant interviews, what Strauss (1987) called in-vivo codes.



Figure 1. The Transana coding environment.

Clips may be grouped into containers called ‘collections’, which are nestable. As well as being a container for clips, a collection has one or more associated keywords, which enables data retrieval by keyword searches. While the coding of video data was time-consuming I found the ability to search on the resulting thematically indexed video materials very useful. Part of the rationale for taking this analytic approach to visual data was based on constructing a more lateral representation of the cohort than I thought a conventional video-production environment alone would deliver. Each participant interview was broken down into discrete units of data which became the building blocks for analysis before being migrated across to the video editing environment. To process visual media in this way would, apart from being effective in managing large volumes of data, be well suited for multi-platform textual and audiovisual delivery. In using Transana the researcher is essentially designing and populating a database which may be used throughout a study for locating both textual and audiovisual data within the master video media. As Berg (2001: 35) notes: ‘data

needs to be reduced and transformed in order to make it more readily accessible, understandable, and to draw out various themes and patterns.’ In this environment the researcher is able to conceptualise data according to his or her chosen analytic coding approach, build thematic categories as well as create free nodes which are useful for outliers and other atypical data.

Transana is not, however, a video editing application but rather a text and audiovisual data analysis tool. Its only support for interoperability with a non-linear editing (NLE) application is in its ability to export a time-coded ‘Keyword Collection report’ (roughly equivalent to an edit decision list) from which edit points are entered manually into the NLE program. (The development of an application programming interface (API) to enable seamless migration of time-code data to the editing environment would make Transana a far more productive tool.) In the present study Transana clip titles were manually mapped to video clips within the NLE environment, providing easier referencing and identification across platforms (see Figure 2).

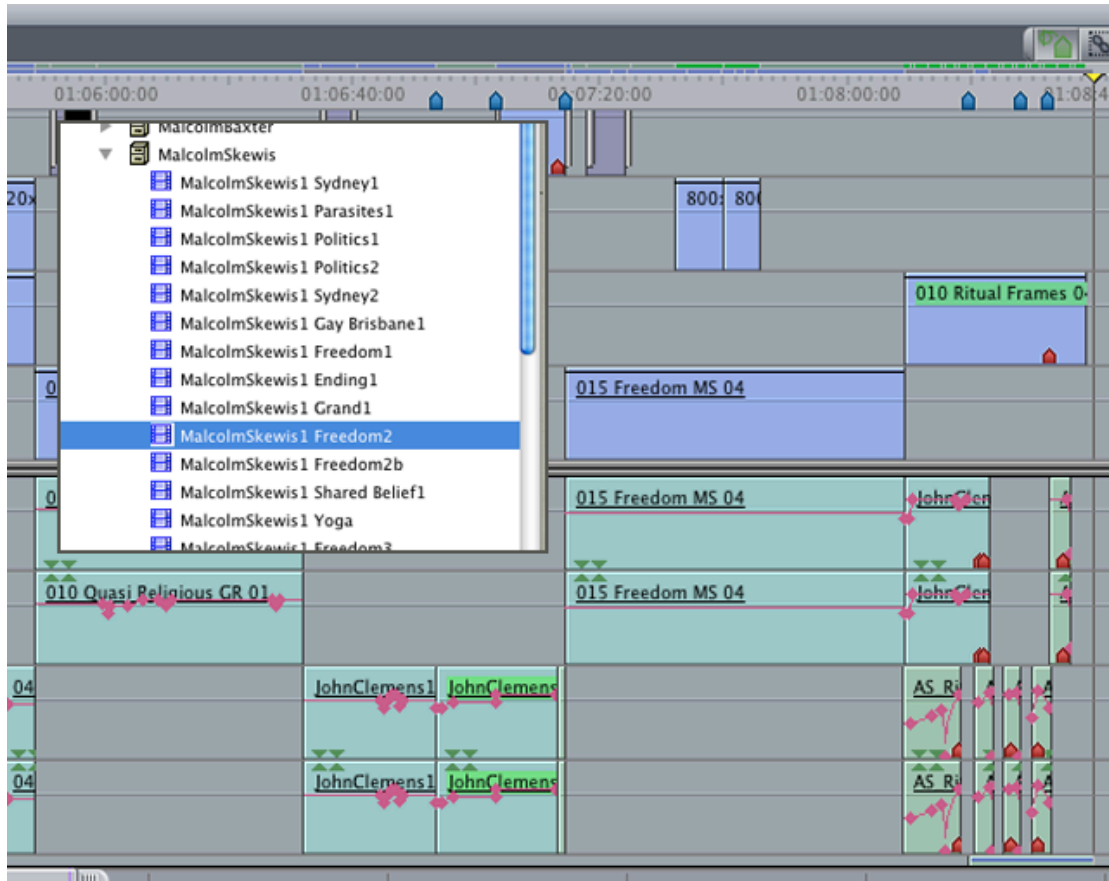


Figure 2. Clip titles in Transana (inset) mapped to NLE environment.

The coding process

To use principles of grounded theory in analysis is to take a recursive approach to coding data. As noted above, this includes the constant comparison of incoming and experiential data, that is, participant perspectives as interpreted reflexively by the researcher. As the aim of this study was to produce a visual ethnography which was both descriptive and the outcome of a methodical analytical process, it was important for narrative flow to not be lost in the coding process.

The present study adopted a two-stage coding model advanced by Charmaz:

1) an initial phase involving naming each word, line, or segment of data followed by 2) a focused, selective phase that uses the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize large amounts of data. (2006: 46)

I took an open, line-by-line approach to coding, which involved labelling and associating fragments of textual data with keywords. Since Transana allows for multiple keywords to be linked to a single unit of data, it was also often the case that larger blocks of text were coded for their narrative coherence and flow. Each unit of textual data is time-coded during the coding process which links it to its location in the associated video media. Figure 3 shows an example of line-by-line coding in which a transcript is broken down into discrete textual data units, and keywords assigned in Transana's 'Data' window.



Figure 3. The Transana coding environment with (inset left) transcript textual data and (inset right) the Data window with Keywords and Keyword groupings.

A major consideration of the coding process was how units of data would translate to an audiovisual medium. Transana's 'Video' window allows for constant monitoring of linked video media which may be used for comparing textual with visual data. Visual data can be evaluated for its narrative coherence as well as for any non-verbal communication effects of interest. The coding of data for narrative coherence during the first phase worked towards maintaining the data's narrative integrity in the second phase. This, at any rate, is how I would interpret and apply the grounded theory principle of keeping close to the data and to be mindful of the concern in narrative theory of data fragmentation. For Riessman (2008), the fundamental distinction between narrative and grounded approaches to data lies in their respective treatment of context. As with other category-oriented approaches to analysis, grounded theory relies on abstracting data in order to generate new meaning from personal narrative and other original sources. Narrative analysis, by contrast, seeks to retain 'the sequential and structural features that are [its] hallmarks' (Riessman 2008: 12), and have in addition implications for individual agency and intention. Thus, arriving at a workable integration of these two approaches to data analysis at times required weighing the breaking down of data against preserving context while giving careful consideration to the ethical implications for participants. (Context and representation were the primary concerns of the participant validation phase of the present study.)

In the initial phase of coding, units of data were broken down, compared and evaluated, and developing a narrative analytic sensibility was integral to that task. However, it may be of some value to note here that a number of my initial attempts at creating categories along the lines of conventional grounded theory were made with

little success. The keywords which were associated with each unit of data were formed into groups, and it was from these keyword groupings that initial categories were constructed. The categories developed at this stage of analysis, while structurally intact, had little narrative coherence or value. These groupings certainly did not offer anything I would consider useful in terms of visual ethnography, and a number of attempts at further refining these categories were abandoned. What I had missed in these early attempts were, I believe, two important factors. The first was a basic aspect of grounded theory: that in building conceptually meaningful themes, many codes, categories and hypotheses would have to be discarded (Charmaz 2006; Strauss 1987). In my initial attempts at category reduction I had tried to accommodate – that is, to abstract – all keywords and groupings; this taxonomic approach was ill-conceived and proved to be unworkable. The second factor was that my approach to abstraction had been too programmatic and perfunctory: I had not developed sufficient descriptive analysis of codes nor linkages between categories. I would also characterise my approach as having been too rigidly defined, especially given the study's ethnographic frame of reference. It was important to not lose sight of the underlying narrative structure guiding the ethnographic discourse (Bruner 1986b), and to take note of Hammersley and Atkinson's observation that 'there is no formula or recipe for the analysis of ethnographic data' (2007: 158). It was at this point that I returned to the selective coding phase of analysis.

Selective coding revisited

Strauss (1987: 20) defined coding in grounded theory as 'the general term for conceptualizing data [which] includes raising questions and giving provisional answers (hypotheses) about categories and about their relations.' Coding does not

consist in labelling and grouping units of data without at the same time parsing, interpreting, comparing and creating meaningful linkages. Experiential data, insight, theoretical data, fieldnotes, documents and other artefacts are all taken into consideration and utilised in the process. What Charmaz calls selective or focused coding is where conceptual and theoretical relationships are made. In the creation of notes and memos during coding, the researcher is continuously generating data *about* data. But, importantly, what grounds this data is that it is recursively fed back into the coding of new, incoming sources of data. These codes are the conceptual reservoir from which themes are ultimately derived.

The focused, selective phase of coding ‘uses the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize large amounts of data’ (Charmaz 2006: 46). Or, as Bryman (2008: 543) puts it, selective coding ‘entails emphasizing the most common codes and those that are seen as most revealing about the data’. These two aspects of selective coding are worth examining as they refer to not only the epistemological assumptions of grounded theory but also those of category-oriented coding generally. The first aspect refers to identifying and categorising the most common properties across the data. If the data shows repeated regularities or references to a phenomenon, perhaps an event or idea, these are expressed as instances in the coding whereupon momentum is gathered and a category begins to take shape. But it is here that frequency may become directly and erroneously associated with significance. In ethnography, with its foundations in anthropology, the codes occurring most frequently may also be those which reflect commonly-held beliefs and shared experience, that is, those which pertain to the evaluative elements of cultural knowledge in the form of ‘ethos’. The ethos of a group or a people, Geertz

explains, is ‘the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects’ (1973: 127).

In the coding environment, the frequency variable becomes an indicator by which phenomena of cultural knowledge may be evaluated and indexed; it is how we know what we know about customary beliefs and values, ethical and aesthetic sensibilities, self-concept vis-a-vis world-view, and so on. However, to develop categories solely from frequency in the data would be problematic as it assumes a quality derived from rates of occurrence. It is further problematised from a qualitative point of view when that which is being evaluated by frequency of instances may not in fact be calculable at all: as Van Maanen (2006) argues, the very idea of a spirit or ethos of a group as something that can be captured by research is in retreat, and persists only as ‘a rhetorical imperative believed to be necessary to achieve closure to a study’ (16).

These concerns follow critiques of structuralism whereby systems are key to indexing an underlying universal structure across cultural phenomena, underpinned by assumptions of a unified human essence or condition. Ethnography is marked by, among other things, the rejection of structuralist assumptions of holism and of ‘the subject as produced rather than producing, as an effect rather than a cause’ (May 1994: 77), and a move towards a critical interrogation of the discourses by which the anthropological subject is constituted, and the institutional conditions enabling these discursive formations (Crotty 1998: 183-213; May 1995). A number of participants questioned the notion of ethos in the form of commonality of belief or meaning within the punk cohort. As one participant remarked: ‘I sometimes question how much shared belief there was within that group ... and I don't know if there was actually

anything that was that shared except perhaps some music and, um, and ways of dressing and ways of living.’ This comment echoes Bruner’s observation regarding participants in performance – that they ‘do not necessarily share a common experience or meaning; what they share is only their common participation’ (1986a: 11).

Rosaldo asserted that, where ethnography seeks out the general rather than the particular, ‘lived experience is robbed of its vital significance’ (1986: 103). In the narrative coding environment, Riessman (2003: 374) cautions against coding that produces aggregations of type that are too narrow: ‘when many narratives are grouped into a similar thematic category, everyone in the group means the same thing by what he or she says. What happens to ambiguities, “deviant” responses that don’t fit into a typology, the unspoken?’ To therefore emphasise only the most common codes as an index of cultural knowledge would be to tend towards homogenisation and the risk of precluding the value of outlier or negative cases in category-oriented coding (Becker 1998) as well as those expressions of unique human experience which narrative analysis seeks to highlight (Chase 2005).

The second aspect of selective coding points to a more qualitatively substantive strategy: a focus on those codes which, as noted, Charmaz views as the most ‘significant’ – or, for Bryman, are the most revealing about the data. Selective coding is a reductive strategy which seeks out a combination of qualitative significance and thematic commonality in the data. It is here that analysis begins to take on a more interpretive dimension. And as there is no one formula for determining significance, this phase of coding requires the researcher, as Patton (2002: 433) observes, ‘to fairly

represent the data and communicate what the data reveal given the purpose of the study'. The essential aim of analysis is to make sense of large amounts of data.

During the coding phase of the analysis, I had recourse to reassess how I might further reduce these categories into narratively meaningful thematic clusters (core categories) which would form the basis of a visual ethnography. In the initial phase of open-coding I had atomised the text into codes which I then reconstituted into groupings in the selective coding phase of analysis. In my coding of transcriptions of interviews with 36 participants approximately one thousand keywords were generated which I sorted into over 50 initial categories or keyword groups.

On revisiting selective coding my approach to the data was in fact messier, but only in the sense that it was more focused on the qualitative: I took a more conceptual and interpretive approach to analysing the data; I returned to earlier notes and memos I had created when labelling and generating keywords for reference; and I became less concerned with structuring the data in the taxonomical sense of trying to include everything. A strategy I also found useful during this phase was to make use of Transana's 'Video' window to focus more specifically on narrative flow. This technique allowed for a combined focus on relationships and linkages between categories while looking ahead for ways to mesh these with what I would interpret to be conceptually significant in a visual environment.

But just as grounded data requires interpretation, narratives also 'do not speak for themselves or have unanalyzed merit; they require interpretation when used as data in social research' (Riessman 2003: 372). The potency of narrative when integrated with a grounded theory approach lies not only in keeping check on the data's coherence

and flow during the coding process but also in facilitating selective coding, which ‘requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize your data incisively and completely’ (Charmaz 2006: 57-58). A narrative approach to analysis also helped to build the bridge from coding to the conceptual and the visual. The end result aimed to reflect both narrative and structural significance – a visual ethnography produced by drawing on aspects of grounded theory and thematic narrative analysis. The inductive, exploratory approach of the research and the expected visual-ethnographic outcome comprise what Ryan and Bernard (2000) call the ‘analytic purpose’, and it is this factor which largely determines the design for analysis – that is, aspects of grounded theorising with a narrative sensibility.

Thematic narrative strategies in analysis

A major challenge of analysis was the question of how to identify and code data which referenced and was relevant to the scope of the study – that is, subcultural affiliation within a cohort, during a particular time, and at a particular place. Accordingly, I made the decision early on to limit the focus of the research to the ‘story’ itself. However, as much as participant discussion focused on descriptive what-type statements – people, events, places as well as ideas, practices, beliefs – a good deal of information was also communicated non-verbally in the form of facial expressions, gestures, cues, and other visual data. It became increasingly apparent that I would need to preserve where appropriate this sense of the *telling* as this type of implicit data was often integral to context, provided insight into the participant, and enriched the story. Such an approach to data analysis underpins a more general objective of narrative inquiry which is to preserve agency and subjectivity in the face

of monological and structural grand narratives (Clandinin, Pushor & Murray Orr 2007; Riessman 2003, 2008).

Three strategies drawn from principles in narrative and thematic analysis were used to conceptualise and code the data. These involved identifying statements that addressed the research topic directly, were relevant to temporality and sequence, and were relevant to site and place.

The first conceptual strategy differentiated keyword groupings that concerned explicit-type knowledge statements from those of a more implicit type. Early in the study I was interested in developing a parsing criteria for identifying what I understood to be two basic data types extant in interviews: the first concerned specifically the participants' memory of the people, events, and artefacts of the period in question, and the second concerned the way in which these memories were recalled, reflected upon, and communicated in speech as well as non-verbally. This second type of data reflects the multitude of effects expressed consciously or otherwise by the participant in the course of recounting their experiences within the cohort. These effects are of interest to narrative analysis because they include the *why* and *for whom* of communication in the form of performative and rhetorical expressions which exist in the research setting and its mediated contingencies. As Riessman observes, 'individuals must now construct who they are and how they want to be known ... identities can be assembled and disassembled, accepted and contested, and indeed performed for audiences' (2008: 7).

This explicit-implicit dyad would to some extent map to conceptual distinctions in thematic analysis which Braun and Clarke (2006) call the ‘semantic’ and the ‘latent’. The semantic is concerned with ‘explicit or surface meanings of the data’. The latent refers to ‘the *underlying* ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations – and ideologies – that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data’ (Braun & Clarke: 13). Typically one or the other of these approaches is employed. For Riessman (2003: 373), thematic analysis focuses exclusively on the *told* rather than the *telling*; it is a subset of narrative analysis rather than a method in its own right, as advanced by Braun and Clarke (2006). Ryan and Bernard usefully situate these distinctions within the two broad approaches of narrative inquiry – namely, the ‘*linguistic tradition*, which treats text as an object of analysis itself, and the *sociological tradition*, which treats text as a window into human experience’ (2000: 769).

Narrative, as Colyar and Holley observe, ‘has been defined in a great variety of ways and sometimes with considerable disagreement’ (2010: 72), and it was only after some shifting back and forth that I settled on a workable understanding of how it would apply to analysis. I wasn’t convinced by the delineation of thematic and narrative analysis which exclusively emphasises the *what* as opposed to the *how* and *why* as this definition was only partly useful in analysing visual data, which cannot be stripped down to textualised content alone (that is, without being abstracted from a storied discourse).

Developing a narrative sensibility was instrumental to the analytic process, from the coding environment to its visually-mediated outcome, to maintain the integrity and

continuity of storied data. I therefore worked with a definition that would include consideration of communication beyond the explicit as this would allow for the preservation of context as well as performative and other nuanced expressions inherent in the visual medium. So, while implicit-type data would become neither a primary focus of analysis (conversation, structural-syntactic, sociolinguistic) nor a core theme of the research, these would inform and be integral to its visual outcome: rhetorical and performative expressions would be retained through the coding process where considered potentially meaningful.

An example of data expressing explicit-type attributes is presented in the following participant transcript excerpt.

Chris Fay: I remember people spit on you, I think if you're new or something. And I'd sort of get home and people gobbed over your back or some people had done that. I think it was a thing, it was just like: Welcome – not! You know? But it didn't stop me. I remember I just cleaned up my jacket and whatever, dry clean or whatever, or a batch – just clean the fucking thing, and then I went back. Yeah, that didn't stop me.

The explicit-type keywords assigned to this passage related to at least the performative practices of spitting, initiation moments, rites of passage, and expressions of character in terms of dignity and perseverance. This passage also contains implicit expressions which increase considerably when viewed in audiovisual form: much more is being communicated both verbally and non-verbally,

and we are able to make a very different kind of connection between the substance of these statements and the person speaking them than we would reading it off the page.

In the next example, a participant recounts her experience of having been a punk as a positive one. Multiple keywords were assigned to this passage which were associated with both explicit- and implicit-type statements.

Annie Barrett: That was a really fantastic time of my life, you know? And it's all of a sudden, with Facebook now, it's all just everyone's all just popping back up and it's like you're seeing all these people befriending you and you're going, oh long time no see ... and I'm going, who the hell is that? I can't remember them. Oh my God and – you know? No, no negative, I didn't feel a negative at all. I just wish I had have kept going and taken the next step and, you know, done something really original with my voice and – but, you know.

This passage contains a range of conceptual markers including: past and present tenses; social networking and associated scepticism; the re-establishing of connections with a dispersed cohort; statements concerning memory and recall; assumptions about the reliability of memory and motional effects; expression of regret; and an explicit statement about musical ability which is simultaneously a tacit expression of an assumption about a perceived failure to act in the world. The passage is also concerned mostly with implicit aspects of reflection: there is little direct descriptive data relating to the period in question. That is not to say, however, that only explicit-type data was of interest. On the contrary, some were selected precisely

for their implicit expressivity. The explicit-implicit dyad was used as a means to make sense of the data from the initial parsing phase of labelling keywords to conceptualising and further reducing keyword groups. To excise data solely on the basis that it was not explicitly relevant to certain circumscribed areas of discussion would be to lose potentially valuable material expressed in nuanced, suggestive, and non-verbal communication, and especially so in a visual medium. The use of video as the primary means by which the present study would be disseminated introduced a vast array of possible meanings and readings. Thus, while it was my intention to make sense of the content of participant statements, the research also produced a whole other, messy and unwieldy dimension of communication which remains largely open to interpretation.

The second conceptual strategy drawn from narrative inquiry concerned temporal aspects of the data, such as sequence, consequence, and contingency, which are integral to preserving context and storied qualities. In the present study I was interested in reflections on a particular period of time, spanning some 18 or so months, which would be structured for the most part chronologically. Interviews addressed a schema which was broadly sequential: pre-affiliation (background), affiliation (experience), post-affiliation (disengagement through to present).

Participant transcripts were first broken down into collections in Transana according to the interview schema. The majority of the data related to affiliation and experience, particularly as interviews became increasingly unstructured and participants gravitated toward speaking to this time frame.

Narrative temporality, which was built into the research design from the outset, was extended to the coding framework: codes were shaped by integrating participant concepts across a sequential linear axis. For instance, discussions concerning contact and identification with and disengagement from punk subculture were associated in Transana with the keyword group ‘Participant Affiliation’, and discussion concerning ageing, youth, and other present-tense concepts came to form the keyword group ‘Age and Legacy’. These keyword groups were continually built on while at the same time serving as a constant visual reference for video construction. This approach highlights how integrated narrative strategies may enhance category-oriented coding such as grounded theory by providing a sequential dimension, a sense of ‘moving through’ and of reflection, which might otherwise be difficult to develop in storied data.

The third strategy drawn from narrative analysis concerned the particular and situated aspects of the data in relation to place. Close to one third of the keyword groups were directly related to place, suggesting a continuing significance for participants.

Discussion ranged from specific recollections of the Grand Hotel and its locale to Australia in the context of colonial legacy and globalism. Place was also discussed in relation to punk subculture, often in comparative terms: Sydney bands, venues and other music spaces were compared with those of London and New York, as was the significance of punk in Sydney in relation to other centres. Also discussed were sites considered as significant to the cohort. These included households, squats, and shops – particularly import record shops, which were vital to the pre-digital distribution of punk artefacts such as records, zines and badges as well as news and information.

These sites were also key for making social connections with others interested in

punk, and a number of participants identified these spaces as a gateway to punk subculture.

Participants reflected on particular streets, suburbs, highways, railway stations, and arcades such as the Tank Stream, the Imperial Arcade, and Crystal Palace as places of enduring significance. Notable too was the fact that participants regarded sites such as Sydney's international airport as meaningful, where many of the cohort would regularly converge to see off those departing for London, if they themselves weren't departing. I found this interesting in that this is the type of transitory and generic commercial space which, for Auge, is representative of the *non-place* of 'supermodernity', expressed in 'the anonymity of motorways, service stations, big stores or hotel chains' and characterised by an excess of time and space, and of 'the acceleration of history' (1995 106, 119). Such non-places were remembered by participants as spaces not of alienation but rather of meaning which could express group identity.

Place emerged from the coding environment to form three of the nine distinct conceptual themes underpinning the video production. The opening segment, which relates to the hotel building and to its becoming a venue, derives from thematic codes associated with the site. The second segment derives from codes associated with the significance of place in the lyrical content of a number of bands as well as participant discussion on the subject. The third, exploring the leaving of Australia for the UK, was derived from codes associated with participant views of nation and culture.

Analysis in video production

The audiovisual component of this study was developed *through* analysis. The approach adopted during the study's development was not of first making a 'film' or 'video' but rather of *undertaking research which is realised in a video product*. In its overall ethnographic framework, the video product was envisaged as the 'writing up' of the research process within a visual discourse. The relationship between data analysis and video production is underrepresented in the literature (Banks 2001; Pink 2001, 2008), and thus for me formed the most intuitive phase of the research process. Categories developed in Transana were continually mapped to the NLE environment, and data coding and video production were undertaken almost simultaneously: as each participant transcript was coded in Transana, a corresponding entry would be created in the NLE environment. However, though the video product is an outcome of analysis, it is not a literal visual rendering of analysis.

Concurrent coding and visual development across two environments continued until category reduction in Transana had reached a stage where the NLE environment would become the primary site of analysis. This transition point was largely determined by the limitations of Transana's video editing and production capabilities. Coding in Transana provided a good sense of the substantive nature of the data, which were now indexed and fully searchable across multiple fields. From this point forward Transana's database would be used mostly as a reference tool; searchable by keyword or keyword group (category), as well as by participant, it would return coded results both as text and as video sequences.

The NLE environment became the main site of visual analysis and video production. Although analysis was now governed by a visual-narrative approach and units of data were audiovisual, I continued to refer to the grounded theory notion of the core category when constructing thematic video segments within the NLE environment. And while by this stage a select number of categories had begun to take shape, I was interested in how this specific stage of the process would continue to relate to the grounded theory approach which was so integral in Transana. That is, I was interested to know whether these steps could be formulated in a grounded theory context.

While sporadic, and still in its early stages, some moves have been made to develop a visual grounded theory methodology. Taking the Glaserian model and applying it to visual research, Konecki (2011, 2009) develops an analytic approach based on the constant comparison method and image sequencing. Using and comparing images and sequences of images ‘to generate theoretical codes or relations of codes ... give[s] a comparative insight into empirical data’ (Konecki 2011: 147). The sequence is important in this approach, as it is in grounded theory generally, as a means to recognise patterns in the data. Image content, while an important part of analysis, does not reveal enough about the discourse of its production, and continues to be ‘dominated by the use of semiotics and content analysis’ (Liebenberg, Didkowsky & Ungar 2012: 59). Thus for Konecki, ‘[t]he dimension of production, demonstrating and reception of the image/picture should also be analysed and taken into consideration in the constructing of theoretical hypotheses’ (2011: 151).

The discourse of image production became one of the nine core segments of my video research. The segment titled ‘Imagemakers’ focuses on the production of visual

artefacts produced from within (and by and large for) the cohort. Among the areas discussed are the making and processing of photographs and film, the discourse in which the objects were made, and the nature of their reception. Participant reflections on image-making in the late 1970s highlights a number of discursive differences between visual production in the era prior to the 'digital turn' and the present. Rogoff (2002) locates a shift in methodological approaches to the analysis of images and their circulation as having occurred in the late 1970s and the 1980s and continuing to the present, which she characterises as a world wherein,

meanings circulate visually, in addition to orally and textually. Images convey information, afford pleasure and displeasure, influence style, determine consumption and mediate power relations. Who we see and who we do not see; who is privileged within the regime of specularly; which aspects of the historical past actually have circulating visual representations and which do not; whose fantasies of what are fed by which visual images. (Rogoff 2002: 25)

A significant aspect of visual data analysis lies in situating the image within the plurality of modes of discourse in which it circulates. In the segment referred to above, the focus was on the emic nature of image production, circulation, and consumption. The segment was derived from a group of categories consisting of a large number of codes relating to the construction of subcultural identity and meaning through a range of discursive practices and rituals.

As a category-oriented analytic methodology, grounded theory generally follows a process of breaking down and reconstructing data into categories which are then integrated, resulting in a core or set of core categories (Glaser & Strauss 1967/2006; Strauss 1987; Strauss & Corbin 1998). The epistemological bases by which that result is arrived at, however, differ considerably. The relationship between analysis and visual mediation raises a specific methodological question concerning the place of the researcher in grounded theory. One of the schisms within the grounded theory field stems from the problematic of the core category: is it constituted by a process of discovery or construction? That is, does it emerge of its own volition or is it helped along, as it were? I raise the matter of this schism in grounded theory to highlight the approach taken in the production of the visual component of this study, which is informed by the place of interpretation in Strauss and Corbin (1998), and in the constructivism of Charmaz (2006, 2008). In contrast to what they consider an objectivist lack of reflexivity in Glaser's position, these authors advance the place of researcher intervention in the emergence of the core category. Statements of findings 'are interpreted abstractions ... "constructed" out of data by the analyst' (Strauss & Corbin 1998: 145). When Charmaz states, '[t]he researcher composes the story; it does not simply unfold before the eyes of an objective viewer', she is drawing on an established epistemological position that culture is invented (Wagner 1981) and written (Clifford & Marcus 1986). Constructivism acknowledges that the researcher's influence permeates the research project. For Glaser (2012: 30), however, Charmaz has overblown what is merely researcher bias, 'a variable to consider' but one which can be corrected or 'minimized to the point of irrelevancy'.

In the context of this study, a core category did not come about without researcher interpretation and intervention. Categories were developed according to both the analytic purpose and the overall aim of the research design. That process was invariably influenced by my own discreet preferences, particularly in action-oriented practices and interaction: ritual practices of music, dance, graffiti, image-making productions, interpersonal relations, and so on. In grounded theory, Charmaz asserts, the researcher's analysis 'tells a story about people, social processes, and situations. The researcher composes the story; it does not simply unfold before the eyes of an objective viewer. The story reflects the viewer as well as the viewed' (cited in Glaser 2012: 30).

The present study thus situates the role of the researcher as one of co-creation and co-construction. The approach taken to analysis was that of discovery insofar as the research pathway was not well represented in the literature; however, the notion that outcomes emerge from the data of their own accord was not evidenced in this study. The active role of the researcher, therefore, makes explication of the research process all the more critical, including detailing the operationalisation of each stage reflexively (acknowledging the researcher's situatedness, positionality in the process) and self-reflexively (the researcher's ideological position and biases).

The grounded theory notion of category integration was adopted as the framework for the development of the main thematic video segments. A series of central, or core, thematic categories was developed through analysis to form the structure of the video product. In grounded theory, categories become core by way of a process of 'densification' or 'saturation', which may be viewed as a final stage of integration.

Glaser and Strauss (1967/2006: 70) explain that core categories, ‘those with the most explanatory power, should be saturated as completely as possible.’ By explanatory power the authors are referring to its integrative efficacy – ‘its ability to pull the other categories together to form an explanatory whole’ (Strauss & Corbin 1998: 146). The researcher ‘should continue to saturate all categories until it is clear which are core categories’ (Glaser & Strauss 1967/2006: 71).

The model later advanced by Strauss and Corbin emphasises a more textual-descriptive approach to integration which includes writing the storyline and reviewing and sorting memos (1998: 148). This is differentiated from ethnographic description, which, it is argued, lacks grounded theory’s analytical and theoretical underpinnings. Ethnographies ‘reflect attempts to depict the perspectives and actions of the portrayed actors ... The final presentation is organized around well-developed and ordered themes, but the themes are not connected to form an integrated theoretical scheme’ (Strauss & Corbin 1998: 20-21). Category saturation, then, is linked to a theoretical outcome which is achieved by ‘theoretical sampling’. ‘The purpose of theoretical sampling’, Charmaz (2006: 100) states, ‘is to obtain data to help you explicate your categories. When your categories are full, they reflect qualities of your respondents’ experiences and provide a useful analytic handle for understanding them.’

In grounded theory the integration of major categories to one core is equated with a central theory or theoretical scheme that is meant to explain all of the data. However, the nature of the outcome depends on the aims of the research: ‘if one’s ultimate research goal is to arrive at a set of findings rather than theory development, then integration is not as relevant’ (Strauss & Corbin 1998: 155). The aim of the present

study was not to arrive at an abstracted theoretical outcome developed by way of a single methodological pathway. Rather, a pluralistic approach was taken in order to develop a video product which would represent a coherent reflection of the social life of the cohort. Data collection methods were drawn from ethnography, the overarching research framework. Grounded theory was adapted to an analytic framework which also comprised aspects of narrative inquiry and case study methodology.

In the final phase of the video production, audio, textual, and visual media were woven into the series of nine thematic segments constituting the main structure. Grounded theory promotes the view that no one type of data is better suited than any other in developing a category, and theoretical sampling ‘allows a multi-faceted investigation, in which there are no limits to the techniques of data collection, the way they are used, or the types of data acquired’ (Glaser & Strauss, 1967/2006: 65). Suchar (1997) found grounded theory procedures useful in helping ‘to see and analyze patterns in photographic data’ (35) in his image-based social research. In Konecki’s visual grounded theory research, theoretical sampling was used to ‘saturate categories using data from photos and other visual data’ (2009: 64). On this basis, the process of associating audio and visual media with the main structure of the video may be viewed as a form of saturation by theoretical sampling. Each of the core categories was further developed using additional data produced mostly from within the cohort. Other data came in various forms including follow-up correspondence with participants, further occasional observation, and ongoing engagement with the literature. The application and continued comparison of data can add a visual richness and thickness to a category while refining and enhancing its narrative flow. Whether ‘saturation’ is the most appropriate term to describe the moment, at some point the

researcher has to be satisfied that each of the categories have been sufficiently developed. In the present study I was fortunate to be able to present the video component of the research to participants for participant validation, which provided valuable feedback and a further source of data.

Participant validation

Participant validation, also known as respondent validation or member checking, is a practice whereby participants are asked to respond to the research as a ‘way to establish the meaningfulness of the findings and interpretations’ (Lincoln & Guba 1985: 315). It may be performed by many means, for various purposes, depending on the nature of the research. In the present study, participant validation was undertaken to further assess the credibility of the research, and as an ethical consideration built into the study to provide participants with a means to respond to their contribution to the research, especially prior to its dissemination in the public domain (Pink 2001: 145). Although matters of accuracy, corroboration, and cross-referencing had in many instances been addressed in the data collection and analysis phases, participant validation provided an important opportunity to make further adjustments to the visual research. Data in the form of participant feedback was assessed and, where appropriate, incorporated into the late stage of video production.

Participant validation, as a practice of feeding data back into the research, has a long history within visual-based inquiry. The pioneer ethnographic filmmaker Robert Flaherty would screen rushes for his subjects as a way of ‘eliciting their feedback and suggestions for future scenes that they could film’ (Barbash & Taylor 1997: 24). ‘It became usual,’ Michaels observes, ‘to show the results of field-recording to the

subjects, and insert their responses in the completed film itself' (1994: 34). In ethnography generally, participant validation is considered valuable in that participants 'may have access to additional knowledge of the context – of other relevant events, of temporal framework[s], of others' ulterior motives, for example – that is not available to the ethnographer' (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007: 182).

In the present study, my tendency was to agree with Bloor (1978) who argued for a correspondence between the researcher's and the participant's view of the participant's social world as a recognition of the researcher's interpretation. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 314) asserted that participants ought to be able to recognise the researcher's interpretations 'as adequate representations of their own (and multiple) realities'. For Torrance, participants should recognise as 'a fair and reasonable reflection' that which is, in the end, 'the researcher's construction' (2012: 114, 116).

On that basis, the participant recognises in the researcher's representation a reflection of his or her own social world which, by extension, must acknowledge that it is a reflection also for others of their social world, and an interpretation of multiple realities. This view of participant validation therefore does not seek to confirm a single social reality from a group unified in an 'ethos', nor in a 'truth' of that reality, but instead aims for a cohesive heterogeneity of views among individuals. The notion that representations can be validated until such time as they represent a single 'true' social reality is problematic. Seale has argued that the focus on truth value in social research should be replaced by a concern for credibility (1999b: 468). In other words, instead of veracity in representation, credibility seeks recognition in interpretation.

I have made a distinction here between the validation of data and the validation of interpretation. As discussed above, matters of corroboration and accuracy in the data were addressed in the data collection and analysis phases of the research. Participant validation in the present study was undertaken to further assess the credibility of the research.



Figure 4. Introducing the video work at a participant validation session. Copyright 2013 Deborah Shaw. Reprinted with permission.

In October 2012 I conducted a group participant validation session at a small film venue in Sydney (see Figure 4). The response to the video screening was successful inasmuch as participants were satisfied with how they were represented and that their comments made in interviews were not used out of context. At this and subsequent

sessions I made note of the issues raised by participants, a number of which were further considered in the production of the video.

One participant questioned the greater focus on some individuals over others. This was not a question of why certain individuals were included in the sample while others were not, but of the priority given to some participant stories over others. Colyar and Holley refer to this as a matter of ‘focalisation’, that is, the considerations made by the researcher as to what narratives are selected over others in the story, and ‘through which character, actor or event the story will be told’ (2010: 76).

Focalisation, the different weighting given to different participants, resulted for the most part from the core of the video being the product of analysis. Other deciding factors were that certain narratives invariably had richer or thicker descriptive properties than others, and certain participants were present at certain events when others were not, or had performed certain roles where others had not. Yet while the story did take precedence, all of the participants appeared in the video as inclusivity was seen as essential to a heterogeneous representation of the cohort.

The length of the video (75 minutes) was another matter of interest to participants. In fact, the question of length was raised regularly also by non-participants who were aware of my study. As the video was not produced for traditional media broadcast, such factors as television slots did not determine its running time. The video was developed as research with the aim that it be disseminated over the internet. That decision was largely informed by my interest in open-source culture and its commitment to knowledge sharing. The video would be distributed as a free and legal torrent, available for download via peer-to-peer networks.

Among other matters raised by participants was the question of the absence of sex and drugs in the research. I had to some extent wanted to avoid perpetuating the trope of ‘sex, drugs and rock ‘n’ roll’ in the context of punk subculture for two reasons: firstly, it is replete in punk narratives and media; and secondly, I was interested in exploring sociality outside of these categories – that is, to ask the question: Could punk have existed outside of the conventional triad of sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll, and if so, what might it have looked like? For participants punk sociality was inseparable from music performance and production, and thus became a major part of this study as interviewing and analysis progressed – contrary, that is, to my own initial preferences and intentions for the research. That, however, would not be the case for the analysis of sexuality and illicit drug use in punk sociality.

During one interview session a participant raised and discussed at length the matter of their sexual awakening and experiences as a teenager during the late 1970s. I admitted my surprise at this as only one other participant had discussed sexual experience and that was only in passing. Moreover, though I had associated punk subculture with matters of sexuality (mostly as an element of style) and gender (relations and politics), I had not until now associated punk subculture with sexual experience, at least not at a personal level. And although it was far from unusual that participant discussion of experience would not reflect my own, I was unsure how to situate this data. By the later stages of analysis the code ‘sexuality’ had been discarded along with a good deal of other coded data as part of the process of the integration of categories. As discussed above, focused coding in grounded theory emphasises the most common codes and those which are most significant and revealing about the data. Sexual experience had

not been analysed as either common (frequency) or significant in the data – not even as a revealing negative or outlier case; nor was it selected on the grounds of its expressing visual-narrative properties in the coding.

On reflection, I thought it odd that in a study of sociality within a youth subculture – even if reconstructed from participant memory – the experience of sexuality should be absent. I don't believe this particular exclusion was necessarily made consciously or intentionally – and, again, the analysis process was not taxonomical; nor was it without its moments of creative discretion. Nonetheless, this was a case where I, as researcher, could not be certain whether my bias had influenced the outcome. That, at least, was how I would perceive it, as not knowing the extent to which my own preferences had infiltrated the research process. This instance, I believe, further supports the constructivist position that the researcher's preferences (both explicit and implicit) permeate all aspects of the research decision-making process, and that bias is more than merely a variable to be corrected.

Regarding the inclusion of the matter of illicit drug use in the study, I considered the instances where it was raised by participants during interview sessions as either potentially ethically problematic or of negligible significance. In one instance drug use was discussed at some length by a participant who had undergone treatment in the 1980s for narcotics addiction. Among other concerns the discussion included an anecdote that related to petty crime. Although the incident occurred some decades previously, the participant requested immediately at the conclusion of the interview that the remarks not be included in the video.

If I had grappled with something of a nebulous bias in the representation of sexuality in punk subculture, the matter of drug use was far more tangible and the decisions to make omissions were very much conscious ones. In observing the ease with which some participants in some instances divulged personal information, I could not be certain that such disclosures would not later give rise to harmful consequences. The fact that participants in this study had agreed to take part without the safeguard of anonymity very much deepened my sense of responsibility towards them (see Appendix 1 for further discussion of this subject). It may be argued that an inconsistency exists in, on the one hand, taking an inductive approach to research while, on the other, intervening in its outcomes. However, I would argue in this case that the ethical principle of non-maleficence outweighs whatever potential benefits it may have to the field. Above all, the aim of the research would be an audiovisual document developed through researcher-participant cooperation, a dialogical artefact.

The approach to analysis taken in this study combines aspects of grounded theory and narrative methodologies. The approach to coding was guided particularly by the model of grounded theory developed by Charmaz (2006, 2008) and the thematic narrative analysis model advanced by Riesmann (2003, 2008). The strategies within these respective approaches were integrated within an overall ethnographic methodology focused on a thematic visual outcome. Both the category-oriented research approach of grounded theory and the personal, storied approach of narrative inquiry contributed to the conceptualisation of data, which provided the foundation for the resulting visual production. Following the main analytic phase of the study, research participants assessed the video production at a validation screening which provided further ethical and analytical consolidation of the overall research design.

Chapter 6

PRESENTATION AND OUTCOMES

How people are represented is how they are treated.

Stuart Hall

Once the participant validation phase of the research was completed I cut a preview version of the video for public screening. By this stage I had titled the video *Distorted: Reflections on early Sydney punk*. The organisation of the first screening event was done in collaboration with two of the participants in the study, Bob Short and John Clements. I had raised the idea with Bob and John, both writers, of giving readings at what I had initially planned to be a film night. They convinced me that music performances would make for a more social and inclusive event. I had some initial reservations about the potential obstacles involved (financial and logistical) in putting on a screening which was also a music event. These reservations also concerned my wanting to control and contain the context in which the video work would be publicly shown. However, I later recognised the inconsistency of that position and reversed it. It was vital to consider the participatory and collective aspects of the research process, and that the moral ownership of the video was just as much with the participants.

The venue for the event was a colonial-era hotel on Parramatta Road, Annandale (see Figure 5). Ten acts performed following the screening with a number of bands reforming for the first time in 35 years. The event was publicised only on social media as I became concerned about the venue's capacity. As it turned out around 450 people

attended which was the upper limit of capacity. A minimal door charge covered costs, which included a digital video projector and screen as well as sound equipment, with the remainder of the takings donated to Animal Liberation NSW. It had taken a village of sorts to produce the video and the same could be said of its first public screening with many people generously donating their time for the event. The sense of shared moral ownership of the research was also expressed in the non-commercial distribution of the video product.



Figure 5. Audience at the first public screening in 2013 of *Distorted: Reflections on early Sydney punk*. Copyright 2013 Christian Darque. Reprinted with permission.

Audience and dissemination

On the question of audience and for whom he made film, Rouch remarked, first, for himself, his participants (his prime audience), and finally: ‘For the greatest number of

people possible, for all audiences' (1995: 96). A similar approach to audience types is found in Bennett and Peterson's (2004) categorisation of music scenes as local, translocal, and virtual. The local approximates a specific geographic site, a type exemplified by the Grand Hotel 'scene'; the translocal describes any number of scattered scenes characterised by a shared interest in music and lifestyle; the virtual may be characterised by more recent online and globally connected formations with shared cultural interests. I considered these approaches when thinking about the audience and dissemination of the present study.

The first public screening event in Sydney drew together many from the Grand Hotel cohort in addition to what I observed to be a younger audience interested in local punk history. This event was significant in that it brought participants and the wider cohort into a space in which sociality was physical and face-to-face. In that environment I observed what might be called a kind of personal-biographical resolution among many of the cohort insofar as it allowed for social reconnection, discussion and reflection to take place. Further screenings took place at the Punk Film Fest, Berlin, the Down Under Berlin film festival, and the Portobello Film Festival, London, as well as the Melbourne Anarchist Club, and broadcasts on AlexTV, Berlin. These screenings across physical localities were partly translocal with audiences interested in punk or aspects of the subculture, and partly general. The video had from the outset been intended to be disseminated via peer-to-peer networks. In December 2013 I began the initial seeding of the video over the BitTorrent network in two formats: one as a PAL-DVD file, the other as a smaller (highly compressed) Matroska file. This form of dissemination, which provides open access across the internet, reflects a nexus between the approaches in punk productions, open source, and the

mode of ethnographic filmmaking advanced particularly by Ruby (1980, 2000) as discussed in Chapter 3. My experience with working within this approach, which incorporated member checks and ongoing communications, was that it fostered a sense of openness and collaboration between myself and the participants and contributors.

Significance of the research

The present study contributes to knowledge in the area of cultural studies, specifically within the domain of post/subcultural theory concerned with punk. The thesis presents new knowledge in the form of a reflective ethnographic account of punk in late 1970s Sydney. In doing so, it addresses a key concern in recent punk scholarship wherein, as Bennett (2006: 220) observes, ‘very little effort is made to engage with the shifting demography of the punk fanbase.’ While a number of the participants in this study expressed a continued, direct affiliation with punk subculture, the majority had maintained (online and offline) friendships, partnerships and marriages within the punk cohort, and expressed a continued interest in punk by attending occasional music and film events. Moreover, many participants expressed a continuity in their political and ethical values, albeit by way of more considered articulations. What this suggests is not so much that individuals grow out of punk subcultural affiliation so much as punk formations transform and respond to its shifting demography. The reformulation of a subculture as a living culture rather than one frozen in time or spatially fixed has its corollary in core debates within the literature of anthropologically-based ethnography. In particular, the debates stemming from the ongoing spatio-temporal and ideological decolonisation of that discipline (discussed

in Chapter 3) help to contextualise and historically situate punk as a cultural response in Sydney, Australia, in the 1970s.

A growing number of publications and media produced in recent times on the subject of punk subculture has contributed to a rich and varied corpus of cultural knowledge. Yet, as Furness points out, ‘this body of knowledge is never only about punk in the first place’ (2012: 17). While the video document sought to present insight into a past subcultural lifeworld, it aimed also to convey some of the logics of temporal displacement and the fragility of memory from which we daily make meaning in our lives. Part of the motivation for undertaking the study concerned my sense that affiliation in punk subculture in Sydney, Australia, was seen as insignificant and somehow second rate when compared with the accounts from major centres elsewhere. To question what has become the dominant, transatlantic narrative was, in that regard, an important impetus for the study. And while the body of knowledge concerning punk subculture grows, much of the literature and media reviewed during the course of this study serves to write the sociality of punk subculture from the record. As such, I hope that this study has made some contribution to research in the area of participant experience in first-wave Sydney punk subculture.

As the video component of the study was concerned with addressing the research topic areas, I felt it important that the written component focus on the methodological approaches underpinning the construction and production of the video work. It was necessary therefore to explicate at length the methodological processes behind the video work, counterbalanced in part by a more personal and reflexive approach to the text. The account of the process of constructing a creative work by way of

ethnographic methodology may, I hope, be of value to those interested in grounding their creative practice in social research methods through the use of qualitative data analysis software. To the extent that the methodological approaches discussed are increasingly deployed across a range of disciplines, they are arguably becoming detached from their historical disciplinary moorings, which is implicit in the use of the term visual ethnography rather than visual sociology or visual anthropology to describe this study. The analytic process by which the video was produced makes extensive use of narrative inquiry and grounded theory, both established strategies in the domains of, among others, sociology and anthropology. It would therefore be expected that the visual analysis process advanced in this thesis would contribute to not only visual anthropology but also to visual sociology.

Further research

A major pathway for future investigation could be a further consolidation of social research methods and analyses in the production of cultural and creative works. The separation of ethnography from its disciplinary foundations creates an open field of inquiry in which micro-scale politico-ethical imperatives rather than grand epistemological projects guide the research. In practical terms this needs to coincide with further advances in software interoperability and development of a more effective workflow environment. The deployment of audiovisual-oriented database-driven applications in cultural productions may provide further scope for new approaches to media production which seek to challenge the notion of the auteur in creative processes (Cohen 2012). As the present study suggests, authorship and decision-making are evident at the most discreet levels of data analysis and video

production, which would signal a need for a better understanding of how agency and autonomy are demarcated and constituted in production processes.

Contrary to the myths of methodological objectivity and value-neutrality, researchers have an effect on the lives of their participants and collaborators, and to artificially inhibit or ignore this effect is disingenuous. Group emails, social gatherings and screenings were all instances of the researcher creating and influencing social phenomena – that is, inventing or writing culture (Wagner 1981; Clifford & Marcus 1986). During the course of this four year study I often considered the potential effects of the research in relation to my initial objectives. Throughout the study there arose a number of unexpected developments which continually reshaped the research pathway. One such unanticipated development was what may be viewed as the cathartic effects of reflection and discussion in the research setting. Whether participants positively discussed viewed aspects of subcultural affiliation such as a sense of camaraderie and belonging, or more negative aspects such as marginalisation, there appeared to be, at least among some of the participants, a perceived benefit in reflecting on one's past. Indeed, a number of participants expressed surprise at their experiencing something of a cathartic effect following interview sessions, which, as with narrative inquiry, 'provides ways for individuals to make sense of the past' (Riessman 2008: 8). This aspect of social research forced me to question the boundaries of the use of qualitative methods to elicit cultural knowledge, and the justification for such use, as well as the attendant ethical implications and the effectiveness of the instruments available to gauge ethical outcomes.

As with philosophers and interpretation, to practise ethnography means not only to describe the world but to change it. In the context of poststructuralist micropolitics and punk ethics, another pathway for future ethnographic inquiry might be the investigation of research within a discourse of well-being. This may involve moving into traditionally disparate areas, such as memory studies, with a view to better understand the potential therapeutic aspects of ethnographic practice.

Final thoughts

In reflecting on the personal dimension of the study, I had anticipated that it would challenge and reshape the narrative I had carried with me since my teens. While I don't recall a great deal about my own experience identifying as a punk, I have always held fond memories of the Grand Hotel. I had just turned 16 and was still at school when its back room opened as a punk space, so it wasn't until after moving to the city from the outer south-western suburbs of Sydney in 1978 that I began to go there, along with many other underage kids. During that year my affiliation with the subculture intensified, resulting in what some might consider a 'lost' or 'wasted' year, but which, for me, was a period of commitment to a punk lifestyle. Then by early 1979 my interest in punk was lost – not because punk had 'died', but rather that the cohort had for the most part dispersed. I related very much to one participant's description of events during this period, and his transition from punk affiliation.

Malcolm Skewis: when it started getting defined and people within the movement started to define it more, I felt more and more estranged by it and ... less and less comfortable in it, and I think that was because ... it became limiting, and the thing I liked about it in the beginning was that it

... there were no limits or at least we felt there weren't. It was up to us [to] choose and not for someone else to choose or to decide what it was to belong in that group or to be part of that group.

From 1979 to the early 2000s I rarely thought of that period of my life, or at least gave it little serious thought. It was only while studying ethical theory that I began to reflect on Sydney's punk moment, particularly on the type of ethics (albeit in a mostly ideal sense) that punks aimed to live. I found in many cases I could more easily identify with the ethical and political standpoints of some of punk's later permutations than the one I had lived through. However, after undertaking this study I began to see the narrative I carried with me of early Sydney punk had become somewhat monochromatic. The overriding hope I have for this study is that the video work adequately reflects the diversity and variety of experience that can exist in the subcultural lifeworld.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics

Beauchamp identifies five useful criteria for ethics in social research: autonomy; non-maleficence; beneficence; justice; and ‘a positive contribution to knowledge’ (cited in Alston & Bowles 2003: 21). The first three principles are mostly concerned with potential harm to participants, the latter two the nature and intention of the research.

Some of the ethical considerations of this study were atypical in that participants were to agree to their identities being made known in the public domain. This was a necessary part of the research design and is a precondition of most documentary production. Ordinarily, confidentiality is integral to participant autonomy and a conventional cornerstone of social research ethics. I was aware therefore that clarity around informed consent and a considerable degree of trust, care and responsibility was necessary in my relations with participants.

While institutional safeguards were present in the form of the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 2), Participant Consent Form (Appendix 3), and the Participant Approach Script (Appendix 4), I took the position that further mechanisms in the area of autonomy should be available to participants involved in this study. The main aspect of autonomy which required further consideration concerned the area of confidentiality. Since the results of research were to be made available in the public realm in audio-visual form, it was necessary to build into the methodology an added safeguard to allow for further participant self-determination over how they would be represented.

At the outset I was not aware – indeed could not have been aware – of the totality of effects the study might have on the participants. Or put another way, I was aware that there may be effects which would not be made visible until the video work was close to completion and beyond. As Berg notes: ‘Even if researchers can protect subjects from harm during the course of research, they must also consider what happens thereafter as a direct result of the research’ (2001: 62). Comaroff and Comaroff (1992: 12) also urge the researcher to ‘confront the complexities of our relations to our subjects, texts, and audiences – especially because the impact of our work is never fully foreseeable.’ Having certain expectations, but not knowing either the results or the effects of results, is particularly common to grounded approaches in social research. Fine (1993: 274), in discussing some of the more difficult aspects of informed consent in the context of grounded theory, observes: ‘Not only are we unsure of the effects of explaining our plans [research goals] but often we do not know what we want until well into the research project.’

Although I had confidence in the area of the ethics provisions that concerned autonomy and informed consent, I did experience some unease about the degree to which I and the participants could not fully foresee potentially maleficent effects in regard to how participants are represented in the video work. I had to some extent anticipated these concerns prior to undertaking fieldwork and understood that some form of participant validation would be necessary. The idea of introducing a latter-stage participant critique into the video work itself was considered, however, as the practical realities of time, finances and other resource limitations of the study became more pressing, this avenue was not pursued. As Bryman notes, increasingly tighter

institutional requirements ‘have led to a less open-ended approach to ethnographic research’ (2008: 418), which in this instance also included a more streamlined creative approach. However, this is not to disregard the fact that, as Macfarlane points out, ‘a research project needs to be “do-able” in the time-frame you have available. In this sense, all research involves a degree of compromise’ (2009: 60).

I was aware that discussion during interview sessions, with a view to being in part made available in the public realm, would most likely be of a more tempered and considered nature than those which would take place under guarantees of confidentiality or anonymity. Nonetheless, the research process was envisaged to be conducted as much as practically possible with a spirit of collaboration and information about the study made as explicit as possible. And while I was cognisant of the view that confidentiality ‘encourages honest responses’ (Kalof et al. 2008: 49) and that anonymity elicits a more personal type of disclosure (Charmaz 2006: 36), ultimately I resolved to not be concerned with how this might potentially affect participant attitudes or perhaps temper certain discussion areas (Fine 1993: 276).

As it turned out, participants were not discernibly concerned with their part in the study being made available in the public realm. On the contrary, many participants communicated a sense of enthusiasm about sharing their stories, and the idea that they would contribute to knowledge in this area – however modest that may be. As Charmaz (2006: 27) notes, the interview method allows the participant to reflect on the past as an expert, and to share ‘significant experiences and teach the interviewer how to interpret them’. Perry (2007) argues that the researcher should not presume to know the participant’s wishes in these cases, and that enabling informed decisions

about anonymity and identification ‘can provide one step toward equalizing power relationships between researchers and participants’ (149-150). Holcombe challenges social researchers to engage critically and innovatively with notions of ownership of data and cultural knowledge, arguing that ‘interrogating the knowledge management paradigm is ... an emerging field of research practice’ (2010: 29). This move from anonymity towards attribution and acknowledgement stems in part from growing understandings of knowledge holders, custodianship, and the provenance of story.

Additionally, the ethics provisions provided ample protection to the extent that participants would give final approval over their contribution and were able to, should they wish, withdraw from the study at any time. Although there were a small number of comments given in confidence both during and after interview sessions which the participants requested remain confidential or off-camera, I found the majority of the discussions at interview sessions to be open and direct, and was satisfied that participants were comfortable in what they chose to discuss. If there was to be any potential cost to building participant validation into the research process I suspected it would be in either participant disapproval of how they appear or sound on video, or in participant disagreement with how they are represented, perhaps their statements being perceived as out of context. I understood that any participant rejection would be a concern for me as this might result in any number of revisions of the video work. The idea of a participant withdrawing from the study would also have obvious consequences for me, however, a principle I had kept in mind throughout the study was that such instances are best seen as part of the research, and that they may have value for other researchers using similar methodological strategies. Wadsworth (1997: 13) identifies the possibility for participant rejection of analyses in the structural (as

distinct from phenomenological) level of the research. This is where the researcher may have re-cast certain long-standing views held by the participants who may disagree with or reject the researcher's analyses. Harrington (2003: 611) highlights a general unease within the tradition of ethnographic research when it comes to participant acceptance: 'there is always a certain amount of anxiety in awaiting a response – a phenomenon ... echoed in the field notes of numerous ethnographers'.

In collaborative research models, such as in emancipatory research (Brown & Strega 2005), action research (Whyte 1991) or transcendent ethnographic filmmaking (Falzone 2004), potential obstacles and conflicts may be resolved or even bypassed altogether by continuous communication and close involvement with participants throughout the research process. Where disagreement is unresolvable, or a position intractable, acknowledging such a problem is part of the research and can be done by iteratively feeding it back into the research throughout the life-cycle of the study (Tacchi, Slater & Hearn 2003). Such close, collaborative involvement with participants was, however, unfeasible in this study due to the limited availability of participants.

A participant validation screening session was held in October 2012 in Sydney. My primary concern here was that participants were satisfied that they and their contributions were not taken out of context or misrepresented. All participants were contacted by email with the details of the video screening. Other arrangements for viewings were made for those living outside of Sydney. At the later stages, in particular after this first session of participant validation, I became more confident in taking the position that, if there were any maleficent effects of the video work, these

would be negligible and outweighed by the majority of other criteria. Issues raised and suggestions made by participants at the participant validation stage mostly concerned misspellings and other minor inaccuracies in the video, as well as some suggestions regarding creative matters.

Following the group session of participant validation held in Sydney, I needed to arrange for the remainder of the participants to view the video work and seek final ethics clearances. This involved contacting each of the participants, most of who lived outside of Sydney as well as outside of New South Wales. I understood that most of the participants had little spare time, but the lack of response to my emails from a number of participants had made me uneasy and I wondered whether it might have been due to the legalese tone of the approach protocols and the information and clearance documents which were sent as attachments to the emails. MacFarlane (2009: 26-27) notes that ‘an overly legalistic and defensive interpretation of the duty to ensure participants understand [confidentiality] rights by a research ethics review board, often through issuing a detailed consent form, can have deleterious consequences.’ These are the ‘front-end’ requirements of institutions tied mainly to duty of care and legal liability aspects of the research – best-practice checks and balances put in place to safeguard researcher integrity or ethical behaviour. As Grayson and Myles argue, ‘the “unreasonable demands” ... of research ethics boards have caused a drop in response rates in social sciences research’ (cited in MacFarlane 2009: 27).

I was mindful of Bogdan and Biklen’s observation that ‘most conventional procedures for informed consent and protection of human subjects amount to little more than

ritual' (cited in Berg 2001: 47), and are not particularly appropriate for qualitative fieldwork (Lincoln & Guba, cited in Tisdale 2004: 23). It was my experience that, within the cohort, there were a number of participants for whom an ethical clearance form from an institution would not necessarily constitute a guarantee of ethical integrity. As Charmaz (2006: 27) observes: 'Research participants appraise the interviewer, assess the situation, and act on their present assessments and prior knowledge'. In this study, participants knowing me as having been part of the cohort would have served not only, as discussed above, as a means of access but also as a means of evaluation: 'real research (and research ethics) is a "lived" experience and not one which can be neatly captured in an ethical approval form' (MacFarlane 2009: 26). However for those with whom I was re-establishing links as well as meeting for the first time through the present study, it would be important to have the written guarantee in place. (This was made evident I believe by the latter group's querying of the PIS more so than the former group.) It was interesting to also note that a number of participants, on top of having read the PIS, were interested in knowing who else would be taking part in the study before consenting to being interviewed. One participant agreed to an audio interview on the basis of making an assessment of a list of interviewees I sent through by email. This I understood to be a precautionary measure which situates ethical value in the cohort rather than, or as well as, in the researcher.

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



‘An ethnography of early Sydney punk subculture’

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Des Devlin which will form the basis for the degree of Doctorate of Creative Arts at the University of Western Sydney under the supervision of Assoc. Professor Hart Cohen, Associate Head of School (Research).

What is the study about?

The purpose is to investigate the experience of individuals who were involved in the late 1970s punk scene which revolved around the Grand Hotel, Railway Square, Sydney. Very little reliable information is available on early Sydney punk subculture. This study aims to explore the broader social aspects of the scene through the reflections of the individuals who experienced it.

What does the study involve?

If you decide to participate, I will interview you at a time and place of your convenience. The interview is fairly casual and I try not to direct it too much as the aim is to explore your reflections and views.

The interview is divided roughly into three parts.

1) What were some of your experiences before you became involved in punk. This can be anything of your choosing and topics can range anywhere from the town or suburb you grew up in to a particular interest you might have had at the time. This part of the interview is really to get a sense of what life was like before punk came along.

2) This part of the discussion is focused on how you got involved in the punk scene, how you might have identified as a punk, and what were some of the things that drew you to it. The discussion here is also mostly directed by you though I might ask you to expand on something you've said as the interview moves along.

3) The last part of the discussion is about how and why you started to move away from the punk scene. What kind of legacy the experience and philosophy of punk might have had on your life since. Again the topics are of your own choosing with occasional prompts or suggestions from me.

The discussion is video recorded as it is for a documentary project. If you do not wish to be video recorded you may elect to be recorded on audio. If you do not wish to be recorded on video or audio it may be possible to conduct the interview in writing.

How much time will the study take?

The interview should take around 60 to 80 minutes with set-up and pack-up time before and after the interview.

Will the study involve any discomfort for me?

The interview should not cause you any discomfort, and you may stop the interview at

any time to discuss any difficulty.

Will the study benefit me?

The study is undertaken in a collaborative spirit and I am grateful for your participation in the project.

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?

The documentary part of the study will be made available in the public domain. Before it is made available you will be given a copy of your contribution to the study in rough-edit form and you will be able to assess and review your involvement in the study.

Can I withdraw from the study?

Participation is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to be involved and, if you do participate, you can withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without any consequences.

Can I tell other people about the study?

Yes, you can tell other people about the study by providing them with my contact details. They can contact Des Devlin (16924097@uws.edu.au) to discuss their participation in the research project and obtain an information sheet.

What if I require further information?

If you would like to know more at any stage please contact Des with any questions you may have. You may also contact Dr Hart Cohen at any stage at the University of

Western Sydney by telephone on (02) 9852 5153 or by email at h.cohen@uws.edu.au.

What if I have a complaint?

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is H9184. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel 02-4736 0883 Fax 02-4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.

Appendix 3: Participant Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



‘An ethnography of early Sydney punk subculture’

I consent to participate in the research project being undertaken by Des Devlin (the researcher) through the University of Western Sydney.

I acknowledge that I have read the Participant Information Sheet and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher.

The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to the use of the video and/or audio recording of my person for the purposes as described in the information sheet, and understand that the results of the study may also be used by the researcher in articles and publications.

I understand that while information gained during the study may be made available in the public domain, no information about me shall be used in any way that misrepresents my views.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.

Appendix 4: Participant Approach Script

Statement of purpose.

In the event that the researcher makes initial contact with potential participant by way of telephone, or has an unscheduled or unplanned encounter in public or at a social gathering with a person the researcher deems a potential participant, or is introduced to such a person by a third-party at such an event, this script forms the basis for social interaction with potential participants where initial contact is made by means other than email or postal service as outlined.

Procedure

Researcher communicates to potential participant the fact that researcher is undertaking present study.

Researcher communicates that potential participant may meet criteria for study; namely, potential participant was part of social milieu or cohort whose experiences are the focus of the present study.

Researcher inquires as to whether potential participant would be amenable to researcher making further communication by way of writing (Participant Information sheet) with a view to providing further information regarding the present study.

Researcher communicates to potential participant in explicit and unequivocal terms that participation in the study is entirely voluntary and they would be under no obligation to participate.

Researcher will at all times seek to address any queries made by potential participant with the understanding that further, formal written information will be made available to potential participant.

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